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STRATEGY PLUS

Number 9
July 1991

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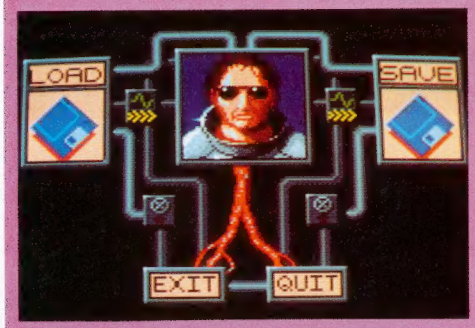

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Making the grade

Software companies like to tell you that PC games are the wave of the future. This reasoning is based on the predominance of the machine in the US. It is also based on wishful thinking. Many UK software companies are wholly owned by their US parents and thus dependent on them for product. The larger UK companies often act as distribution agents for a number of US software houses. In both cases this means a large number of games arrive on the PC format, which until recently accounted for only 2% of UK leisure software sales. How much more convenient then if the PC market could be 'talked up' and all those irritating conversions eliminated. Let us assume, though, that the predicted boom in PC games becomes a reality. How equipped are UK software houses to cope with this new creature in their midst? From the evidence available thus far, the answer has to be a resounding 'not very'.

It is generally agreed that PC owners are older than users of other formats such as the ST. In recognition of this PC games tend to be more sophisticated. This sophistication creates problems; problems that are otherwise known as bugs. As the games get bigger and bigger it will become increasingly impossible to detect every glitch, even with the most rigorous playtesting. By and large gamers recognise this. They are, after all, hobbyists, and like all members of such a brethren are prepared to suffer for their hobby. But how much should they have to suffer, and at what point are they being *made* to suffer? The issue at stake here is that of upgrades and their acquisition. It seems that unless you subscribe to a bulletin board (thus necessitating the purchase of a modem) you may not even be aware that an upgrade exists. Take **Harpoon**, for example. The version being sold in the UK is the 1.1 version. This will not even run the Battlesets for which the game is designed. **Life and Death II** is now up to version 1.3 in the US, though the 1.1 version is still being sold here even though it has some problems. In the case of **UMS 2** the situation is even worse. Due to some confusion during duplication for the PC platform, the wrong version was duped. The correct version, 1.2, runs the game 20% faster and yet there is still mystery as to how this can be obtained. Likewise the 1.3 version of **Railroad Tycoon** has never made an official appearance in the UK. **Links** is up to version 1.45 though there has been no mention of upgrades available for UK users. Indeed, some of the companies do not even know which version they are selling! Clearly this is an absurd situation. The UK industry is certainly amateurish in not knowing that upgrades exist, but this is to be expected after decades of being locked into the arcade mentality where the shelf life of a game was 30 days at best, and 'upgrade' was just another way of saying 'hill'. PC games need good technical support and back-up. The only company in the UK providing this to an acceptable level is Sierra. Full marks to them for ensuring that their UK users have all the facilities that their US customers take for granted – customer service second to none.

If the amateurishness of the UK software houses can be put down to blissful ignorance, no such excuse can be made for their American cousins. Indeed, an attitude of outright cynicism has started to emerge. The feeling is that users are being treated as unpaid beta testers. It's all very well to appeal to players for feedback on the games via the large commercial bulletin boards. Even better that upgrades are posted as a result. But what if you *don't* subscribe to such a service? Should you be treated as a second class citizen? Imagine buying a new car and then discovering a minor fault. You then learn (by chance) that the fault has been corrected. However, if you want the correcting mechanism and to be kept fully informed of any other enhancements, then you must pay in the region of £200 for a modem, membership fees, and on-line time. Nuts? Yes, but that is precisely what is happening in the software business at present. It's not as though the solution to this problem is a terribly complicated one – registered users should be sent upgrades free of charge. After all, they paid for a product that was supposed to be perfect first time around. The upside of this for the software houses would be an increase in the number of registered users, because for once there would be a tangible benefit in registering rather than just becoming another name on a mailing list. Failing this the press could play a part in making information available. This magazine would be more than happy to publicise details of upgrades, enhancements, and bug fixes. So don't just sit there, write something! SP

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AFRIKA KORPS

Just Deserts

by Mike Woodhouse

COMPUTER wargames, as our recent survey showed, come in a number of varieties, from cute little guys running around brandishing their weapons to 'cardboard' squares on 'paper' maps. This game is very much in the latter camp.

The campaign in the desert in 1941 and 1942 was a to-and-fro affair, the advantage switching from Monty to Rommel and back a number of times before the final set-piece battle at El Alamein conclusively signalled victory for the Allies. This game sets out to simulate that period at a fairly high level.

Torture

I have to say that I'm not a fan of board wargames in which half a million counters have to be moved each turn, taking the best part of a week. Equally, I dislike computer wargames which attempt to replicate that particular form of torture. Fortunately, **Afrika Korps** is, in general, pitched more at the strategic than the tactical level, and in some ways plays more like an abstract game than a wargame.

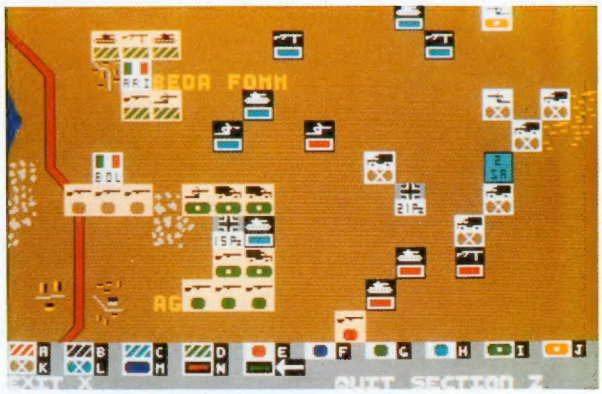
The player has the option to play either side (a separate disk is provided for each) and the objective is either to defeat the opposing army, or to reach the opposite side of the map. For example, Rommel wins if an Axis unit reaches Alexandria, something he didn't manage during the war...

Each army is divided into a number of divisions of up to six units each. These arrive periodically at the edge of the board, and may be supplemented by the allocation of units from the strategic reserve, which starts to develop in turn eight, and continues to do so until turn 24. The allocation of units from reserve is important, as I learned when I finally understood how to do it – too late. If a division has no units on the map, it ceases to be, which reduces the command options, as well as the number of units available at any given time.

Each division has a commander, to whom orders are directed. These take the form of the specification of an offensive or defensive line, together with whether the commander is required to attack, defend or use his discretion. Ridiculous orders (such as ordering a suicidal attack) may be rejected out of hand by the commander concerned! Once all orders have been issued, the commanders will attempt to comply with them, subject to terrain effects on movement and the presence of other units, friendly and otherwise. When attacking, both sides' units use the same algorithm to 'fine-tune' their positioning, attempting to set up multiple attacks on single units while trying to avoid the same thing occurring when the other side moves. This routine seems to work well – certainly much of the aggravation of trying to work this out in a board wargame is removed.

Coast Road

A road runs along the coastline on the map. This is critical to success, since the supply level of your army depends on it. An enemy unit on the road cuts the supply line of any units between itself and your side of the map. Once supply lines are cut, supply level start to drop, followed by loss of morale and finally numbers of men. An interim objective, then, must be to cut the enemy's supply lines while defending your own. The program is smart enough to spot such attempts and either pull back behind the attacked point or, more usually, mount a savage attack to prevent losing territory.



At the start of each turn a brief advisory note arrives from GHQ, along the lines of 'Attack on all fronts', although mismanagement will gradually transform this into 'Advise all-out retreat!'. Badly-mauled divisions will plaintively request reinforcements – it's a good idea to listen to them and allocate reserves immediately, since these divisions seem to be prone to letting their units disband.

Manual Labour

The manual is up (or down) to Impressions' normal level – the basic information is present, but a little more effort (and a few more pages) would have made the game so much more accessible. A big plus, however, to the mouse *and* keyboard implementation. The game is basically menu-driven and selections may be made by pointing and clicking or hitting the appropriate key. It doesn't seem much to make a fuss about, but so many programmers these days seem to be obsessed by mouse-only games that I think credit should be given where due.

Afrika Korps isn't wildly exciting – no flashing lights or sampled sound. It is, in fact, somewhat dry. It creeps up on you though, as the ability of the computer starts to come home to you (and it is a good opponent, even at the lowest of the three available levels). SP

Designed by
Ken Wright

Published by
Impressions

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Available for ST and Amiga
Reviewed on the ST

Sayonara

Production editor Paul Mason is leaving the magazine after this issue to go and study oriental life and beer in Japan. Our best wishes go with him. Taking over will be former *White Dwarf* editor Ian Marsh, who recently has been employed on the far more interesting *Construction News*.

ARNHEM

The 'Market Garden' Operation

by George Campbell

ARNHEM – THE 'Market Garden' Operation – is a tactical wargame for one to three players covering this famous battle. Airborne divisions attempt to hold out against superior German units as Allied ground forces try desperately to link up with them.

The game map stretches from inside the Belgian border to just north of Arnhem, an area approximately 30km by 100km. Play is from left to right, with left corresponding to south, and right being north. Packed into this region are a large number of roads, rivers, and built-up areas.

When playing solo against the computer the player assumes command of the Allies. In the two-player game the Germans are taken over by a player. The three-player game permits one Allied player to choose the American forces, with another taking British and Polish units. In the additional Amiga instructions booklet there is a single instance where the British are referred to as English, thus offending my Scottish sensibilities. A small point, but if this is the only fault I can find then Arnhem must be a good game.

The first scenario is relatively straightforward, simulating a march on Eindhoven, and can be completed comfortably in an hour. It is intended as a primer, offering a fun way to become familiar with the game principles. Fortunately, it is not so tough that it discourages continued play, but is perfect for learning the ropes. This lasts seven turns, little enough time to get warmed up.

Scenarios two and three are a good deal more difficult, relating to operations 'Garden' and 'Market' respectively. Hopefully, the lessons learned in the Eindhoven scenario can be put to good use. The 'Garden' scenario lasts 10 turns, and 'Market' will take a mammoth 26 turns. The fourth scenario is 'The Bridge Too Far', the subject of which should be decidedly familiar, and will take 15 turns to play. The last scenario may take anything from 6-10 hours to play, and is the entire 'Market Garden' operation.

Turns are divided into three phases. Mechanised units move during the first and third phases, while non-mechanised units move only during the second phase. Recce units are permitted to move during all three phases. Combat is preceded by movement, and units may attack only once per turn. The tactical advantages of mechanised units are obvious.

Combat occurs automatically when adjacent to an enemy unit, or if a bombardment has been plotted by artillery. It is important to destroy the enemy in detail, by isolating and surrounding individual units where possible. Friendly risk must be minimised, but enemy casualties should be maximised. Simply slugging it out toe to toe only leads to delays and excessive losses.

There are 13 separate units, five of them mechanised, and eight non-mechanised. The mechanised units consist of tanks, self-propelled artillery, tank destroyers, motorised infantry, and motorised artillery. The non-mechanised units are flak guns, artillery, airlanding artillery, anti-tank guns, infantry, paratroops, glider troops, and reconnaissance units.

It is difficult to gauge the strength of an enemy unit until combat is actually under way. The first few German units to be encountered are fairly easy to brush aside, but can cause delays, the cumulative effect of which can be disastrous. Friendly artillery can provide indirect fire support, even at ranges of up to 12 squares in some cases. This can be very useful if a unit holding one end of a bridge needs to be neutralised.

The game provides the player with a good map, relevant unit information, and any options open to the particular unit being issued orders. These orders are movement, road transportation, bombardment, digging in, or merely passing the time of day. The screen colours are typical of a conventional board wargame, not too bright and not too garish – just right.

The movement of units is smoothly executed, the menu is simple to use, and orders are carried out with minimal delay. Since little time is wasted processing orders each scenario can be played out relatively quickly. Orders consist of a few mouse clicks. In solo play the computer is adept at punishing over-ambitious moves, reducing an overstretched attack to scrap on the battlefield. Indeed, the Germans move around behind the combat arena with great alacrity, introducing reinforcements at inopportune moments.

There are no actual pitfalls in the game, apart from those caused by poor play. However, the possible arrival of enemy reinforcements must always be borne in mind. Similarly, it is all too easy to have your troops tripping over themselves in an attempt to gain ground, especially in the vicinity of a bridge. Snarled columns of troops mean that an attack will lack cohesion and soon becomes sluggish.

Arnhem is an absorbing game, with a minimum of rule book interpretation required before commencing play. It does not fall into the category of being too complex for novice players, and yet provides an increasing challenge for more experienced wargamers.

The whole game is well nicely presented, from the stylish box it arrives in to the screen itself. The rule book is concise and to the point, without being sparse. A good portion of it is devoted to the historical battle, and a good grounding can be gained by paying attention to what really happened. The quality of printing, illustrations, maps, and artwork all combine to form a very professional product. Add to this a capable computer opponent and you have a game worth having on the shelf. SP

Designed by RTSmith

Published by CCS Ltd

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Reviewed on the Amiga

EGA

GO

A Touch of Zen

by John Scott

MANY YEARS ago I bought myself a cheap boxed edition of the oriental strategy game Go. I'd always had an interest in the philosophy of Lao Tsu, the *I Ching*, the offbeat riddles of Zen, Musashi's *Book Of Five Rings*, the ideology behind the martial arts – all that sort of stuff. Go seemed to be well within this tradition; on the surface it seemed to be ridiculously simple – too simple to have any lasting appeal. And yet the strategic possibilities seemed to be endless.

Alas, I never really got to grips with the game at the time. So when I came across this computer version of the game recently I bought it immediately, and have been playing it ever since.

Go is sometimes claimed to be the oldest existing boardgame, possibly originating over 4000 years ago. The board consists of a 19 by 19 grid forming 361 intersections on which the pieces can be placed but, as this may be a rather daunting battleground for the beginner, smaller boards of 13 by 13 or 9 by 9 may be used for a faster and simpler game. This computerised version offers the above three choices.

The object of the game is to acquire territory by surrounding vacant areas of the board with your stones. If you can secure more territory than your opponent, you win. It really is as simple as that! Opponents alternately place stones on the board, and once a piece is placed it remains in that position until it is captured or the game ends. A stone is captured and removed from the board when it is surrounded, in other words when all adjacent vertical and horizontal points are occupied by enemy stones.

The game ends when both players decide to pass a turn or agree that neither can increase his territory or the number of prisoners. At this point each player calculates his score by counting the number of spaces he has captured and subtracting the number of prisoners he lost. Needless to say, in this version the computer handles all such calculations.

The manual gives excellent coverage of both the basic rules and the niceties of game play, together with illustrations of each of the situations described in the text. This means that there is no danger of misunderstanding any of the special considerations outlined in the text.

As one would expect, the program can be set for varying levels of difficulty. This scale ranges from 0 to 100, and does have a marked effect on the skill of the computer player. As always, the higher the skill level, the longer the machine will take to decide its move, but Oxford Softworks has thoughtfully provided graphs to help illustrate how long each move will take for each of the three boards at each difficulty level, also taking into account the speed of the processor in use. In general the lower levels (0–25) are designed for normal play, while the higher levels are better for tournament play using faster processors. Speaking of tournaments, for what it's worth, this program is the European Computer Go champion.

In addition to the skill levels the program also supports the conventional handicap system. This means that the poorer player can begin the game with anything from two to nine stones already on the board. The game menus offer the usual options to save and load games, computer self play (with both players at the same skill level) or two human opponents. There is a hint feature for those struggling over their next move. It is also possible to step backwards or forwards through the game as played so far, to step back to the first move (in order to analyse the progress of a game), or to jump forward to the last move of the game so far.

Other menus make it possible to see the computer thinking as it considers each possible move, to personalise players' names on screen, select the size of board and set any handicaps required, save preferences to disk, and so on. Nothing seems to have been overlooked. Everything I would have expected is there, together with a few extras, though it might have been interesting to watch two computer players slug it out at different skill levels.

The screen display is clear and pleasing, showing the board, the two players, each with clock, and a record of the moves made so far. You are also treated to a passing glimpse of your current opponent, together with a thumbnail sketch of their attitude and history (though I can't say that 'different' opponents showed much variation in their tactics that I could notice).

Of course, the bottom line is – does it play a good game of Go? As an utter beginner, I am perhaps not best qualified to answer, but my impressions after a lot of playing are very favourable. Initially I played the computer at a skill level so low that I'm not even going to tell you what it was – you'd only laugh at me. At this level the program would let me get away with the most outrageous stratagems – a human player, even another beginner would have seen them coming from miles off. For example, if I simply built a wall across the board the program seemed to reckon that everything on my side of the line was off limits and left it alone.

Thankfully at difficulty levels greater than 0 (oops, what a giveaway!) the machine showed a lot more sense. The possibilities of Go are so numerous that I'm amazed that anyone ever managed to program it at all, and it may be that if you are an old hand at the game then you will wipe the floor with your computer opponents. Just maybe. What I can say with confidence is that if you want to learn the game, or if you enjoy it but suffer from friends who go glassy eyed at the thought, then this is undoubtedly the program for you. SP

Designed by
Michael Reiss

Published by
Oxford Softworks

Price £24.99

Available for all formats
Reviewed on the Amiga

MEDIEVAL LORDS

Soldier Kings Of Europe

by Nicky Palmer

IN *STRATEGY Plus* 7, Mike Woodhouse mourned the loss of SSI's **Rails West**, designed by Martin Campion. 'The game's presentation was dry,' wrote Mike. 'The only graphics were a rather static and uninspiring map. Game play was handled through a set of text menus...' but it was a great game anyway, rich in strategic choice and competitive bite.

And what have we in SSI's new release, **Medieval Lords**? Well, it's by Martin Campion; its only graphics are a static and uninspiring map; game play is handled through a set of text menus... and yes, it's a pretty good game.

Up to 10 human and six computer-controlled characters act as advisers to the Lords of medieval Europe (1028-1530 AD to be precise). Each 'player' (including the androids) scores points for guiding his boss to fame and power, within the limits imposed by the power of the realm and the character of the Lord. More about this later. If the ruler dies, his heir will normally take over, but the adviser (after a look at the new fellow) can decide to push off and find a more inspiring leader elsewhere. Normal game length can be selected from 10-100 years, with an option to play on until 1530 if you can't tear yourself away. Allowing about 10 minutes per turn will provide durations of about an hour and a half up to about 80 hours. An interesting option, I found, was to take 50 years to see what can be achieved in a long working lifetime: the temptation is to push for military expansion too soon, in the vain hope of helping to found a huge empire before dying!

Note that non-player realms are also run actively by the computer, though without simulated 'advisers': these will still rise, fall, and fight back if attacked.

Medieval Rule

Most positions start with one or two provinces on the **Risk** style area map of Europe and the Med. Each province has nobles (uppish landowners who will help conquest but want more power), townsmen (traders who yield most tax revenues but don't fight) and bureaucrats (loyal hirelings who increase tax revenue but annoy everyone else). Each are rated for strength and loyalty, though the two usually go together. A typical year at peace will see the Lord touring his domain, supporting each of the three population groups in turn in each province (often weakening and annoying the others in the process). Small empires are easy to keep under control, since if the Lord supports either nobles or townsmen the province will remain loyal for two years; if he has a huge, far-flung empire he will find that outlying provinces especially tend to rebel for lack of attention. An incompetent ruler may also do more harm than good, annoying the other groups more than he helps the favoured ones.

The ambitious Lord generally needs to build up townsmen and bureaucrats first, so as to build up a basic budget surplus. If the adviser pushes this policy too far, the Lord will fritter the surplus on prestige projects and high living, so a strategy of building a vast treasury before creating a huge mercenary army is not feasible, but starting a war with the budget in deficit is almost always a bad idea. Province specialisation is useful: favours can be lavished on nobles in one province, giving lots of recruits in the form of land-hungry noble volunteers and feudal vassals, while making another province a business centre, full of townsmen and bureaucrats.

Once a domain has a halfway decent economy, an army can safely be recruited, made up of a mix of vassals, volunteers, mercenaries, household troops and naval squadrons. This can be used to crush rebellions and outbreaks of heresy within the domain (Catholics stamping on the latter may be rewarded by gifts from the Pope). More usually, it is used to mop up uncontrolled neighbouring provinces and wage war on the other domains. The latter must be declared a year in advance (no Pearl Harbors here), and even the computer-run neutrals can be expected to fight back and launch counter-invasions if they can. It's generally fairly easy to pick off outlying provinces from large empires, but exceedingly hard to take the last province from a corner Lord fighting to protect his treasury and his title. If a province is taken, volunteer noblemen peel off to grab the lands, giving the Lord a ready-made supportive infrastructure. If the Lords didn't bring any nobles along, preferring to rely on mercenaries and the household standing army, he has to make do with the local nobles, who will probably need a lot of stroking if they are not to revolt at the first opportunity.

Heroic Leaders?

Lords are rated for charisma (helps recruit and maintain popularity), rulership (helps internal actions supporting population groups and in several other ways), generalship (helps wins battles) and warlikeness (helps recruitment, but in excess may hamper generalship). As an adviser can expect to work for a number of rulers, it pays to play to the ruler's strengths: with a Mrs Thatcher, say, (warlikeness 9, rulership 2?) it would be silly to focus on internal juggling of interest groups instead of taking the opportunity to raise an army to expand the realm. While all this is happening, European history marches onwards. Campion is a professor

Designed by
Martin Campion

Published by
SSI/US Gold

Price £29.99

Available for the PC only

EGA, CGA, Tandy

keyboard interface only

of history who has used the game as a teaching aid, and crusades, Mongol invasions and plagues can be expected to make life harder. Two positions have special powers relating to the general flow of events: the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. The Pope can gain prestige by setting up independent Papal States, and at high levels of prestige will get a slice of the income of every Roman Catholic Lord; in return, he will vigorously support them against all-comers, especially Muslims and heretics. He can excommunicate obstreperous Catholic Lords, with nasty effects on charisma and popular loyalty. The Emperor differs from other players in that his death will often lead to a change of dynasty (because the Empire is such a desirable possession), which will splinter the empire and put the adviser (yes, us) out of a job.

The full map is huge (one can choose to play only half if preferred), so most of the time things will be happening of which you are barely aware: as a Central European power, say, during a Mongol invasion one becomes uneasily aware of a creeping yellow tide enveloping one eastern province after another. One can get reports from everywhere if desired, with a variable delay factor to allow skimming or more leisurely perusal, but it seems more realistic to concentrate on local reports, and it certainly speeds play.

Medieval Lords is a moderately complex historical simulation with a well-written rule book and a variety of interesting strategies. I found almost no loopholes and dark corners (the data card doesn't explain how to move round the map as the rules say it will, but it's easy enough), and the historical notes are informative without being overpowering. In short, a hit. Well, yes, up to a point. If you want a challenge, not too complex but with respectable computer opposition and a good basis in history, **Medieval Lords** is a very strong candidate. However, a couple of qualifications need to be made. The most obvious is the old-fashioned style. Fighting a battle gives a casualty report, not a picture with gun flashes or a vivid description. Entering orders is done by picking menu choices: joysticks and mice can have a well-deserved rest. The map, even with EGA, is simply a line-drawn set of provinces with colour-coding for ownership and a few symbols for castles and religious alignment. Personally I don't mind any of this, in fact I prefer selection from lists to fiddling with pull-down menus and overlapping windows. You may take a different view: if so, this game will annoy you by its early-80s technology.

The second reservation is that the strategies, though there are several, are essentially repetitive. This is a problem which seems endemic in medieval games. The largely successful boardgames **Empires of the Middle Ages** and **A Mighty Fortress** featured similar designs: there really isn't a lot to do beyond keeping the provinces in order and planning campaigns brief enough not to bankrupt the treasury. Players lucky enough to have a group of wargaming friends should find that diplomacy and alliance-building fill the gap. Playing solo, I expect to return to **Medieval Lords** but probably not very often. That said, just reaching the point where I could write the review has given me two enjoyable days of intensive play, exploring the system, fighting the pesky king of France, finding out just what happens when you defy the Pope. And I never did get a really successful empire. SP

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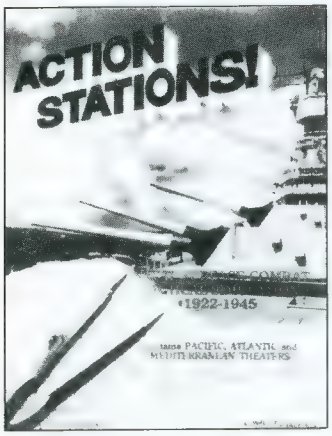

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A WING AND A PRAYER

Strategy in Origin/Mindscape's Wing Commander, by Marcus L Rowland

MY NAME is Rowland, Marcus Rowland, but you can call me Lieutenant-Colonel. It feels as though I've been flying fighters for decades, but the record says just thirty missions, through Vega and into Goddard, plus a brief peek at Antares, a few months that feel like a lifetime. I'm more than a hundred kills up on any other pilot aboard the Tiger's Claw, in half as many missions. Sometimes I worry about that; there's no way I'm that good a pilot, maybe I've just been incredibly lucky. They say that every action has hundreds of possible outcomes, world lines that branch out from each decision; I sometimes think that for each successful mission there are ten or twenty universes where I bought the farm, and I'm just a statistical fluke.

So you're the new kid on the block, anxious to strap into your fighter and go mix it with the Kilrathi. Well, I hope you'll spend some time on the simulator and read all the manuals, I'm not saying that they're perfect but they're the best information you'll get this side of the Academy. If you sail into action without knowing the odds you're going to be cat food.

Like most new pilots they'll start you in a Hornet. Boy, they call it a light fighter and they aren't kidding. It isn't particularly fast, its manoeuvrability isn't especially good, the armour is a joke, and the lasers should have been scrapped years ago. You've got three missiles, but you'll probably have to waste them on fighters. Frankly, a Hornet is an accident looking to happen, which is why the new boys get them first; if you can survive a few easy missions in a Hornet you're probably ready for something better. Just pray that they never send you up against real opposition.

About all a Hornet is good for is following an enemy fighter and chewing it up really slowly. Be very sure that there isn't something larger and meaner getting on your tail and planning to return the compliment. That's where your wingman can help, by keeping the cats off your back. Just be sure to reciprocate.

Next in order of size is my favourite, the Rapier. It's our fastest and most manoeuvrable fighter, and packs a heavy punch. You've got two lasers, two neutron guns, and five missiles, and on after-burners you can outrun anything the furballs have thrown at us. That makes the Rapier perfect for getting past a fighter screen and attacking shipping. Watch those burners, by the way; it's a thirsty bird, and I've come close to running out of fuel a few times.

Even a Rapier isn't fast enough to ignore what's coming up behind, and that's important when you're taking on a slow target like a ship. Usually I get my wingman to keep the cats busy while I crack the targets shields, pop in a missile, then break off and have him take over while I cover him.

One point to bear in mind with any four-gun fighter; if your screens are taking damage your guns will recharge slowly, and firing all four takes a lot out of the system. For dogfighting it's sometimes better to switch to two guns, then you'll be firing twice as often even if you don't do so much damage when you connect. Use the neutron guns if you can, they pack a bigger punch, but mass drivers give you the highest fire rate.

Next up is the Scimitar. You've got two mass drivers and five missiles, but manoeuvrability is only middling and armour isn't especially good. About all I can really say in its favour is that it's a lot better than a Hornet, and the guns have a good rate of fire. A reasonable all-rounder, but try to avoid getting in front of anyone's guns.

Finally we have the Raptor, which would be great if it were twice as manoeuvrable. It has the best armour and shields, mass drivers and neutron guns, five missiles, and a mine. I've yet to hit anything with a mine, but presumably they do work occasionally.

The main advantage of the Raptor is the power plant; enough juice for three or four bursts that'll tear most enemy fighters apart if they connect, and quick recharge if the shields are OK. The main disadvantages are the lack of manoeuvrability, and the fact that the brass sometimes send them out without a wingman. That means that the enemy's attention isn't split, and you can end up with five or six cats on your tail. When that happens use hit and run tactics; go in on a curving course and zap a fighter, then go to after-burners and pull out before anyone gets a clear shot. Keep that up until there are only one or two enemy left, then dogfight.

They save Raptors for really tough targets, which usually have heavy fighter protection, so you'll generally have to take out the escort first. Try to avoid dog-fighting if you can; most furball fighters can fly rings around you. One thing I've noticed is that Raptors lose guns more easily than other fighters; the mass drivers are mounted right on the end of the

wings, and the neutron guns are well forward, so both systems get a real pounding.

That's our side. The cats have their own mix of good and bad and it helps to be sure what you're fighting. Read the recognition manuals, then read them again.

Salthi are the smallest, as manoeuvrable as hell but lightly armed and armoured. You can blow them away easily if you can draw a bead on them, but that can be very hard. I think of Salthi as souped-up Hornets. They tend to turn up on the edges of Kilrathi operations, and I think that they're designed as scout craft with a limited strike role. They'd make great sports boats, maybe someone will tool up to build a racing version after the war.

From the specification you'd guess that Dralthi could be a real problem, but fortunately they're usually clay pigeons. The book says that those big wings restrict the pilot's visibility, but I'm not convinced. All that's certain is that they rarely perform as well as they should. I think that the real reason may be that the cats don't put their best pilots in Dralthi if better fighters are available, so we rarely see them used at full effectiveness. One warning; don't blast them from directly behind, their mines can give you a nasty surprise. Oh, I nearly forgot, some have been seen packing mass drivers instead of lasers; fortunately the performance is still lousy in other respects, so they're fairly easy kills.

Next we have the Krant, a medium fighter that packs a few missiles. It performs a lot like the Scimitar, but the armour is heavier and it's less manoeuvrable. I've blown a lot of these away, which may help to explain why I don't like the Scimitar much. This seems to be their main general-purpose fighter.

The Gratha is almost a Raptor clone, but it's slower and even less manoeuvrable, and the weapons aren't quite as good. They pack a lot of armour and shields, and can soak up huge amounts of punishment. As you might expect, the cats use Gratha as we use Raptors.

Finally, and fairly obviously, watch out for Jalthi, their big gun platform. They're awkward, but they'll blow any Terran fighter away if they can get a couple of clear bursts. Don't even dream of taking them head-on, go for deflection shots and a curved attack run, or get in behind them. The cats seem to use Jalthi in a lot of roles, so don't be surprised if they turn up anywhere.

Kilrathi formations are usually larger than ours, but I think that's because we're on the offensive, at the end of a long supply line, while they're fighting in systems they've held for years and have plenty of bases. Their tactics vary a lot; one thing they try occasionally is to get you to chase one of their faster ships, then have it lead you back towards their main formation. Another thing they'll do is come at you in lines of two or three, in hopes that you'll turn to attack the first ship and be blown away by the others.

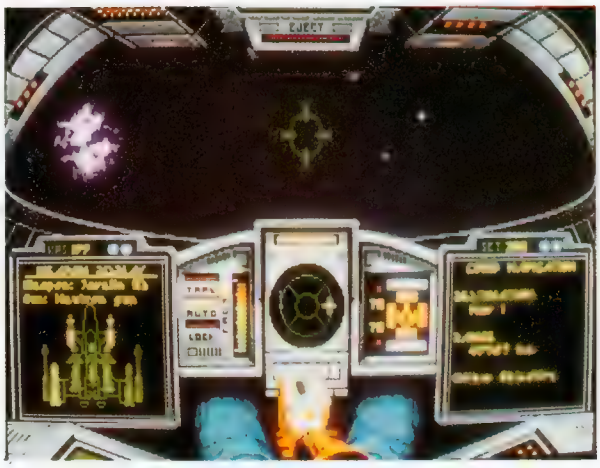
I won't bother listing the different enemy capital ships; if Halcyon has any sense you won't see them until you're ready. All can be destroyed with enough fire power; missiles help, but they aren't absolutely essential. For a guns-only attack take out the escort first, then look for a vulnerable spot near the stern. I must have taken out fifteen or twenty big ships, and you can nearly always find a blind spot that isn't properly defended. Watch out for your screens and hull, front and back; close in their defensive fire can be murderous. If you're using missiles be *very* careful not to punch for after-burners by mistake; ramming a destroyer at 1100kps is an exceptionally bad idea! Come to think of it, ramming anything at that speed is bad news.

I've heard rumours that there are new Kilrathi designs coming into service, and elite units we haven't fought yet. They're upgrading the Dralthi, maybe their other fighters too. If that's true it's going to be a very tough war.

Now time's getting on, and I need my sleep. What else can I tell you? Let's see, there are a few little tips that might help you.

The autopilot is programmed for the most economical course between two nav points, not the safest or fastest. The enemy may know that and plan their ambushes accordingly, I've sometimes run into situations that didn't make sense any other way. If there are no asteroids around I sometimes take a slightly different course at top speed, then come into the target zone at an angle from the shortest course. It can pay off. Whatever else you do, don't forget to put speed up to max as soon as you drop off autopilot, if you forget you'll use your after-burners a lot more and waste fuel.

Watch your target indicator, but don't lock on unless you're going to use missiles. There's a good reason; sometimes it's very hard to see enemy ships at a distance, even if your radar



shows they're there. If you aren't locked on, there's a good chance that the system will target whatever is in front of you, giving you a much better idea of its location and status. If you want another reason, remember that we've captured their ships, and they've captured ours. I once came close to blowing away a Dralthi with a human pilot, and nearly got creamed by some Rapiers I thought were a stray formation. If the transponder is working you'll be able to tell friendly and hostile apart.

The tactical manuals recommend a speed for asteroid fields, but don't say much about mines. I think the best speed for getting through minefields is flat out, on full after-burner. That gives you two big advantages; you're usually well clear of a detonation when it occurs, and you only have to worry about steering around the mines for a few seconds. The worst that usually happens is that your aft shields are dented, and that's soon remedied. Don't try this in an asteroid field unless your reflexes are incredibly good.

I nearly forgot the most important tip of all. You're going to command a wing, aren't you? Thought so. Well, make sure that you take care of your wingman, and throw him a target or two occasionally, or he'll start to get temperamental. We're all in this war together, and there's nothing worse than a prima donna who wants to hog all the glory. Your wingman does a lot to keep you alive, don't abuse him. You've heard of Maniac, I suppose? They say that he got the way he is because his first commander would never let him off the leash. Enough said?

Well, that's me talked out. Buy me some sober pills, then I'm going to hit the sack. If I were you I'd do the same, I think we'll be flying early tomorrow. SP

Wing Commander was designed by Chris Roberts and is published by Origin Mindscape, price £34.95

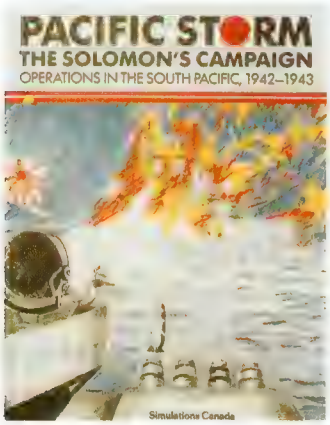
Two Secret Missions disks are available for the game, price £14.95 each

Wing Commander 2 is due out this Autumn

PACIFIC STORM

The Solomons Campaign

by George Campbell



DURING the Second World War the Japanese South Pacific advance posed a deadly threat to the Allied line of communications with Australia. **Pacific Storm: The Solomons Campaign** concerns itself with operations in this theatre as Japanese and American units fight for supremacy. **Pacific Storm** is devoid of graphics. It is a wargame which provides very detailed information in the form of text, and should suit players who are more interested in authenticity than spurious graphics sequences. Simulations Canada has invested all of its effort in gameplay. To support the facts and figures two laminated maps have been provided, on which enemy movements are plotted.

Each turn represents two weeks, from August 1942 until February 1943, a total of 14 turns. The entire campaign can be played out in around three hours, though thinking moves through at the lowest level can add greatly to the time required. Moves are plotted on the hex map, which measures 9 by 15, with each hex approximately 125 miles across.

There is a choice of five game settings; human, human assisted (recommended), human historical, computer, and computer historical. The setting determines what theatre priorities to apply. Theatre priorities include conservation of the Japanese fuel reserve, and stressing army or navy dominance in planning at both strategic and operational levels.

Intelligence allows access to pertinent information; official communiques, an estimate of the strategic balance, anticipated enemy intentions, friendly and enemy assets by area, destroyed assets, the current status of combat units and bases, and the arrival dates of friendly reinforcements. Each particular report has its uses, but for the most part they are estimates only, and the communiques are shot full of propaganda.

Each unit is rated for size, skill, morale, the current rate of serviceability, and weapons accuracy. Weapons have a separate effectiveness against air, land and naval targets, but this information is not readily available to the player. Similarly, units are given virtual protection (speed and evasiveness) and actual protection (armour and damage capacity), and these ratings remain unknown. The weapons accuracy can be altered considerably if necessary, mainly to handicap one player, and perhaps to represent an acknowledged superiority.

There are a number of units available for purchase from the Strategic Pool, at a cost in victory points. Obviously, it is expected that a purchase will pay for itself by the campaign end by destroying enemy units. The Japanese player has considerably more to choose from, including numerous battleships, but there is a temptation to buy when there is no pressing need to do so.

Operational planning is the most important aspect of **Pacific Storm**, and powerful fleets will be of no use if they're in the wrong place at the wrong time. For the Japanese player, who, unlike the American player, does not have fuel coming out of his ears, groups must deliver results to justify a fuel allocation.

Groups are given a mission to perform: strike, patrol, superiority, or transport. The strike orders an attack upon enemy port and base installations in a specified zone. Patrolling groups fight enemy units when encountered, and may well be drawn into a more general engagement. The superiority mission is more aggressive, and is normally assigned to formidable groups such as fleets centred upon a number of capital ships. Ground units and supplies must be moved by a group with an appropriate transport mission. Ships with transport capacity and any escorts assigned follow the group orders.

Missions are further defined by the level of intensity, ranging from 0 (inactive) to 4 (maximum). This indicates the number of sorties which will be generated by the subordinate units. Higher levels of intensity will adversely affect unit morale and serviceability, and are difficult to sustain for any length of time. Conversely, inactive units recover morale and serviceability more quickly than normal.

The group abort loss threshold is particularly important as it indicates the losses a group will accept before it disengages. A high value will cause the group to fight on in the face of heavy losses. A low value will ensure that the bulk of a group remains intact to fight another day.

During combat victory points are awarded for the damage and destruction of enemy units. For example, Japan could lose the Yamato at a cost of 10 000 points to the American player, compared to an individual aircraft costing 2 points. Also, 10 000 prestige points are awarded for the capture of a named location on the map – they're just victory points in another guise. It is readily apparent that although battleships are essential for naval operations they are also too valuable to lose.

Once orders have been input, and new units have been 'bought' from the strategic pool, the turn can be processed. During the mission execution sequence comprehensive staff reports appear in the window, covering engagements on land, in the air, and at sea. Combat results take the form of several lines of text describing the units involved, accompanied by supporting casualty figures. Naval losses are reported by radio and flash across the bottom of the screen. Vessels can be damaged, severely damaged, crippled, and sunk.

One minor irritation is the rule book, which also fulfils the function of game cover. The only fault I could detect in the game system was that the game save option did not appear to work *(This only applies to the Amiga version; the 'save' facility on the PC and ST works fine – Ed)*. This is not a major problem, as the campaign can be played out in an evening without any difficulty.

Simulations Canada has come up with an excellent game. The player interface is easy to use, and the turns are processed very quickly. If you want a game in which decisions really count you need look no further than **Pacific Storm**. Buy it now, you won't be disappointed. SP

Designed by
Robert Crandall

Published by
Simulations Canada

Price £35

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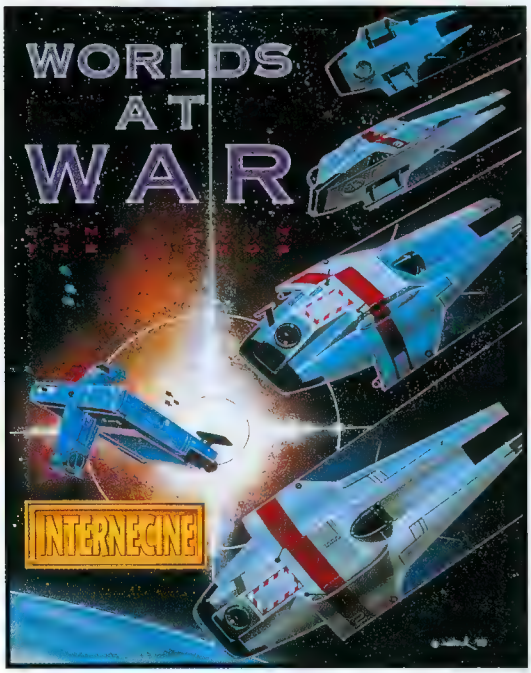

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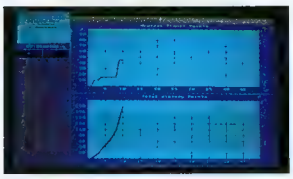

Victory screen showing neutral planets taken by both sides and total victory points for both sides

"Worlds at War" is a game of real strategy for one or two players. It's a game of naval & amphibious combat, on a galactic scale. Simple in concept, 'Worlds at War' can be played in an hour as a small, tactical study with the flavour of a chess game; or for a weekend, as a campaign game with vast regions of territory to explore, huge fleets to manoeuvre, and neutral planets to conquer.

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Pieces represent base planets, neutral planets, task forces of different types, bomber formations, missile barrages, scouts & marine landing craft. You start the game with a certain number of production points & build a fleet based on the strategic requirements of the randomly generated star map. A small trickle of supplies will reach your base planet each turn, but the game is primarily one of tactical combat, not production.

Other Features:

75 page manual, *covering gameplay & discussing: "How to attack neutral planets", "Three Suggested Strategies", "Developing a Scouting Plan", and "Massing vs Dispersion".*

A Victory Point Graph *lets you assess your play and plan your moves. It displays neutral planet points and total points for each turn of the game.*

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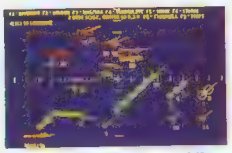
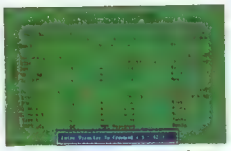


Battlelines engaging, while destroyers lay smoke.



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WORKING ON THE RAILROAD

Railroad Tycoon Design Notes by Bruce C Shelley

ASSISTING Sid Meier with the design and development of **Railroad Tycoon** for MicroProse was the most interesting game project that I've been involved with in a 10 year career in games. Working with Sid is fun, interesting and stimulating, regardless of the topic. I consider him to be MicroProse's Walt Disney, and I have the greatest respect for his ability to capture the fun of a game idea and rapidly get the concept into a playable format. Second, I have been personally interested in railroads for many years. I have a large collection of books, magazines and games about railroads that proved quite useful for **Railroad Tycoon** research. And finally, I generally enjoy games with heavy economic overtones.

1830

As mentioned in the designer's notes of **Railroad Tycoon**, the seed for our game came from playing Avalon Hill's **1830**, designed by England's own Francis Tresham. When I joined MicroProse in early 1988, I mentioned that I had helped develop **1830** and considered it one of my favourite games. We scheduled it for one of our MicroProse gaming sessions, and it became a regular favourite.

I think at this time Sid began thinking of the possibility of a railroad game and he eventually put together a prototype model railroad builder program.

In early 1989 a second major influence appeared: **Sim City** by Maxis Software. This game generated a lot of interest in our offices, and inspired me as a way to make a railroad game work. I worked up a five page proposal for a railroad game that I hoped would give the player much more 'hands on' operation than **Sim City** did. Although this proposal did not start any fires it kept the idea alive.

In August of 1989 Sid went to the beach for a two week vacation, and when he returned he brought back a working prototype of the game that would become **Railroad Tycoon**. It's difficult now to remember what the prototype was like, but some essential features were there, including engines and cars, one day's operations representing a full year, and the railroad construction process.

We continued to experiment with **Railroad Tycoon** trying to decide whether the project was a go or a bust. We got stuck a couple of times, such as when we were routing all trains by programming switches to let certain trains go one way or another (limited fast freights to the left, local fast freights to the right), but no hurdle proved too difficult.

For most of 1989 the procedure was that Sid would give me a new version in the morning (he normally puts in several hours at home at night). I would play during the day making notes about what was good, what was bad, what else would be worth including, and so on. Usually every afternoon we would discuss what we both had discovered playing that day, and these discussions would be translated by him into new code and features by the next day's version.

When ideas seemed to lag, we dreamed up 'road trips' for the team that by October included our artist, Max Remington. Our first trip was to the Strasburg Railroad for a steam train excursion and visit to the Pennsylvania Railroad Museum. Next was the Smithsonian and a National Geographic railroad exhibit, then the B&O Railroad Museum, and finally every model train store in the area. These trips were great fun, good for morale, and really provided inspiration.

MAPPED OUT

This was an exciting time, and team morale was high. The game was changing every day, little by little, becoming a richer and more interesting experience. We knew, or at least hoped, we were building a great game, and it was moving along very quickly. I remember feeling that we were on the leading edge of game design. I had this sense that we were building the best game under way anywhere in the world, and that no one could possibly be doing anything better.

The original **Railroad Tycoon** game was played only in the northeast United States – nearly the same map area modelled in **1830**. As we progressed, the idea for additional maps came up and Sid felt he could handle the programming required. This led to the western US, then England and Europe. The decision to take Europe into the late 20th century came late in the project, but helped give each of the four worlds a distinctive flavour.

The choice of locomotives was mostly left to me, so if you have a gripe about your favourite type being

Railroad Tycoon has just been released for the Amiga

The game was designed by Sid Meier and Bruce C Shelley, and published by MicroProse

left out, you know who to write to. The heavy emphasis on English locos came about because the European map was the last addition. I was also responsible for making the maps and choosing which cities to include. That explains the presence of Elkhart, Indiana, the site of some important New York Central shops where my great grandfather worked for many years.

As I write this piece in late May, **Railroad Tycoon** has been on the shelves in the US for only a week or two. The early response has been very favourable, and I'm pleased to learn that your editor is enjoying the game. In conversation Brian raised two points about the game that he would like to have seen. First, he wanted a multi-player option. We never considered this, mainly because of the difficulty of arranging play. One player could build halfway across the map while the other studied stock prices. There was just no easy way to get over the real time dilemma.

He also wanted to be able to print off the maps so they provided a permanent record of his achievement. We never considered this, but it can be done with a camera utility program. When preparing the manual I captured screen shots at various points while setting up the tutorial railroad. Once these screen shots were printed on a laser printer, our artists could duplicate the shot in freehand for manual illustrations. You can use the same type of utility to capture any of the displays.

Railroad Tycoon was completed in approximately seven months, faster than any major game project in MicroProse history. I believe this is mainly a tribute to Sid's extraordinary skills as a game designer and programmer. Sid, Max, and myself also worked many long hours so that the game could be completed in time for a spring release. For example, the manual was written, illustrated, and laid out in two months of intense work.

At this time I can say that an expansion kit or second railroad game is being considered but no plans are being made until we can measure the response to this game. No conversions to other machine formats have begun, but if the original game format is a success conversions are likely to follow.

Sid, Max, myself, and everyone at MicroProse UK and USA are proud of **Railroad Tycoon** and believe you will find it entertaining, fun and even educational. SP

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UMS 2 CONFERENCE

The planet editor: Ezra Sidran

This conference took place in April on-line in the CompuServe Information Service Games Forum. Questioners included 'Fleeting Thought', Carl Norman, Gerry, 'Flying Gerbil', Mark Adams, and 'Orc'

Strategy Plus would like to thank all participants and CompuServe itself for permission to edit and publish this transcript

I'd like to welcome Ezra Sidran of Intergalactic Development to the Gamers Forum on the CompuServe Information Service (CIS). His **UMS 1** proved to be internationally successful, and even had some serious interest from the military. **UMS 2** is the result of long, hard work in response to a request for an even more extensive, complex attempt to simulate the realities of warfare. **UMS 2** heads in the direction of providing maximum flexibility in the control of game AI, to allow for a wide range of situation simulations.

Ezra: Thanks for the great intro! I would like to add that Mike Pash (MS-DOS) and Andy Kanakares (Atari ST & Mac) are here with me tonight to answer any particular or specific questions you may have.

*CIS: Tell us about how **UMS 1** evolved into UMS 2.*

ES: Well, **UMS 1** users really shaped things by their suggestions. There was also a large dose of input from Dr Ed Bever, who has always been interested in 'grand strategy' wargames.

CIS: Since MicroProse is also attending this conference, could you tell us when will the icon editor be licensed?

ES: We have concluded negotiations with C-Source for licensing the icon editor (actually an IBM font editor). There shouldn't be any problems with this shipping with the **Planet Editor**.

*CIS: How close are you to releasing the **Planetary Editor**?*

ES: I know that there at least two **Planet Editor** beta-testers attending this conference tonight. I wouldn't mind at all if either Andy N or John Fischer would make some observations.

John Fischer: We're on, I believe, the fourth test version of the **Planet Editor** and from where I stand it's about 95% ready, if not all the way. What I mean is that I haven't found any new bugs in the last day or two, so that's a very good sign. For those of you looking forward to it, you will not be disappointed.

*CIS: Once the **Planet Editor** is available how do I get it?*

ES: Write to MicroProse and it will be shipped to you when available. I think 6-8 weeks is an optimistic time frame.

*CIS: Does that mean that the **Planet Editor** will not be ready for another couple of months?*

ES: Yes, I think 6-8 weeks is a best-case scenario for getting a 'boxed' copy of the **Planet Editor**. Of course, we can always use a few more good beta-testers. Again, many kudos to the gamers on CompuServe for helping us beta-test it.
Andy N: I totally agree with John Fischer. The **Planet Editor** now is 95% ready. I have only two minor problems with it.

*CIS: Will the **Planet Editor** be a separate product or be inserted in a new (updated) **UMS 2** box?*

ES: I'm not 100% sure. I think that MicroProse is redesigning the box. I've heard rumours but I don't know for sure. I also think it will be sold separately in Europe. But again I don't know for sure. These are things that are MPS's responsibility, and that's what they do for a living, and they're very good at it. On a good day we write some code and answer the phones.

*CIS: Even though **Planet Editor** will allow for users to make their own scenarios, will you folks still be writing new ones from time to time?*

ES: You may remember that Rainbird sold out of our American Civil War and Vietnam scenario disks for **UMS 1** even though people could, and did, make their own scenarios. I flatter myself that we have a good reputation for depth of research of our scenarios and quality of writing.

*CIS: Writing a good scenario requires a lot of research. Any thought of adding a list of the reference sources you use in the **Planet Editor** manual?*

ES: Actually, I give the public library system a plug. We're also corporate 'friends' of the local library here in Davenport; I can ask for the most esoteric reference book and they always seem to find it.

*CIS: Do you have any plans to make the **Planet Editor** for other systems, and make all the **Planet Editor** files use the same format? (will a **Planet Editor** file on my Mac run on an IBM?)*

ES: YES! YES! YES! Sorry for screaming, but this has been the guiding light since day one of **UMS 2** development. The Mac **Planet Editor** has been done for about six months. Every existing scenario has, in fact, been designed on the Mac and then null-modemed to the other machines. The IBM is 95% done. The ST is about 80%+ done. Ed, on the Amiga is a craftsman. Figure 50% for the Amiga. I think the beta-testers will back me up on this... The **UMS 2 Planet Editor** is the most complex program ever released for 'home' use/consumption. I plan on including tutorials and a Q&A section – based on beta-testers' questions – in the manual. The one thing we all have going for us is that there will be no problems with questions, problems and so on. Customer service is Intergalactic's number one priority.

*CIS: Do you think the **Planet Editor** will be manageable by most wargamers? What are some of the challenges in scenario design?*

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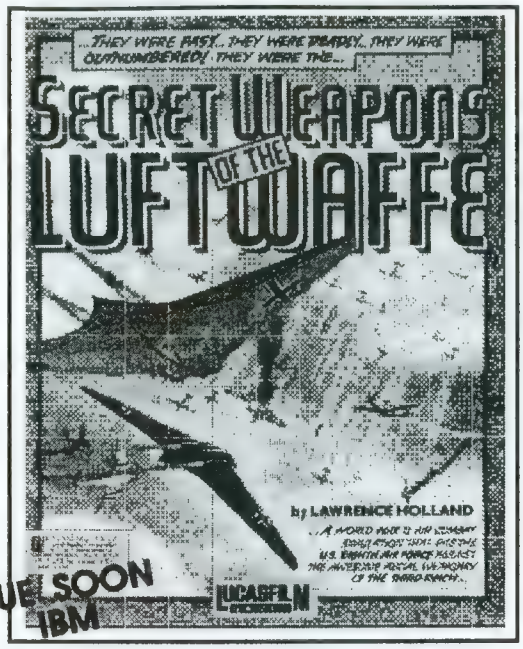
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ES: There are two distinct challenges in designing a **UMS 2** scenario:

1) You have to learn how to control the beast – the **Planet Editor** itself – just learning how to 'draw' terrain forms with it, adding rivers, and so on.

2) You have to do a lot of research and make lots of 'best guesses' about unit strengths, attack terrain modifiers, morale levels and so on. I honestly don't know how many 'fields' have to be entered for each unit but there's probably 50+ variables that have to be calculated and entered for each one. You are always trying to figure out how many movement points French cavalry uses crossing Urban terrain versus Prussian cavalry in the same terrain. That kind of thing.

CIS: Are there enough correlations between the way variables are handled in the ***Planet Editor*** *and the kind of info someone could derive from a good history (with orders of battle, and so on) so that a 'translation' from one medium – history, into another – simulation, would be comprehensible?*

ES: The first step to creating a scenario is getting a good order of battle. I think most wargamers know their special areas pretty well and should be able to jump this first hurdle. Then you have to quantify, or 'digitise' a lot of variables, like the quality of leadership, morale and efficiency. Again, I think that most wargamers will have a good feel for their particular time period. Still, I do expect an awful lot of calls from beginners.

CIS: This is something Matthew Stibbe ran into in ***Imperium****: people didn't get a clear sense of the relationship between the number of 'credits' allocated to a particular 'player' in the game and their overall value in the game's economy. Would there be any way to provide examples that would give users a clear sense of the ranges within which each area variable should run?*

ES: That's a good suggestion. I'm including a section called 'The Art of Scenario Design' in the manual which will try to pass along a general way of doing things. Frankly, I 'best guess' a number of things and then try to fine tune it again and again. Hell, I'm still making changes to the Alexander, Overlord and Napoleon scenarios! I can't wait until the **Planet Editor** gets into people's hands and *they* can make all the changes.

CIS: Yes, I noticed the temps in Alexander in the oceans is a little warm, for instance. But it's not 'glued' into place, so no problem! Is there some indication from user response so far that people are appreciating the flexibility of the system, or are you mainly dealing with users who just want to play already-established scenarios? The manual takes a lot of time and patience explaining the Master Control Panel (MCP) and I wonder how much time people are taking learning that system at the start?

ES: Frankly 90% of the phone calls are from people who have never experienced a 'menu driven' system before. You know, pull-down menus, dialogue boxes and opening files. This problem really accounts for most of the calls.

CIS: Your newsletter Le Guerrier *is very helpful, will it continue and how often?*

ES: The next issue of *Le Guerrier* will be out after: 1) I finish writing the **Planet Editor** manual, 2) I finish the Civil War scenario that I want to do and 3) we get **UMS 2** to take advantage of EMS.

CIS: When will those things be completed?

ES: The **Planet Editor** manual will take 3-4 weeks to get to the typesetters (remember we design and lay it out here, too). The Civil war scenario will take 2-3 weeks (I've been researching for the last 20+ years).

We've got Mike Pash and Robert Birmingham working on EMS. If *I* can write another 400+ pages in the next eight weeks *they* can figure out EMS (right? Am I fair?). EMS is *very* difficult.

CIS: Will EMS speed up the game?

ES: EMS takes advantage of expanded memory in the RAM above 640K on MS-DOS machines. A **UMS 2** scenario is between 1-4 megabytes. If you have a 68000 machine (Mac, ST, Amiga) we can load in an entire data file and expand in memory. However, MS-DOS has a limitation of 640K of addressable RAM. If we can use the extra RAM that EMS provides then we can load a complete **UMS 2** data file into it. Then, on those IBM type machines with 1 or 2 meg or whatever, **UMS 2** would run much faster.

CIS: I have 8 megs in my PC (waiting for OS/2 2.0). I need something to run up there besides RAM disks!

ES: That's right. How many programs can you think of that address that RAM? Even our own compiler (Turbo-C) doesn't take advantage of EMS, yet all kinds of people have it. In fact, we don't have one program here (game or otherwise) in this office that uses it; it is one programming bitch. I wish I had the bucks to simply call up Origin and offer them $20 000 to find out how they did it. Instead we (like lots of other programmers) have to reinvent the wheel. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think any MicroProse product uses EMS.

CIS: Have you ever given some thought to making a dedicated compression program for ***UMS 2*** *scenarios? I figure that on-line services will be a major way to move scenarios about, and I shudder at the thought of downloading a 3 meg scenario from CompuServe.*

CIS: In the Desert Storm scenario is there a way to avoid the Iraqis firing off their Scuds immediately?

ES: Computer controlled nations will always use all available missiles. This is because I wrote those routines and I have a 'use it or lose it' mentality when it comes to ballistic missiles. Don't put Iraq under computer control.

CIS: Any chance of another modern day scenario like Desert Storm being written by Intergalactic, or an Arthurian one for that matter?

ES: I had intended to do simply a 'current state of the world's armed forees' scenario every year. I had begun a fair amount of research when the Persian Gulf went up (curiously, about the same time I started removing the Warsaw Pact forces from our files).

John Fischer: As we all know there were some problems with version 1.0 of **UMS 2**. Most, if not all, of them have long been corrected but I wonder how much some of the early 'bad press' at the local computer stores has hurt sales of **UMS 2**. How are sales going?

ES: We expect to report about 45 000 units in sales (worldwide) for the first six weeks. I think that number is pretty good. Also, sales *continue* to be very strong. **UMS 1** and **UMS 2** were designed to be sold and supported for

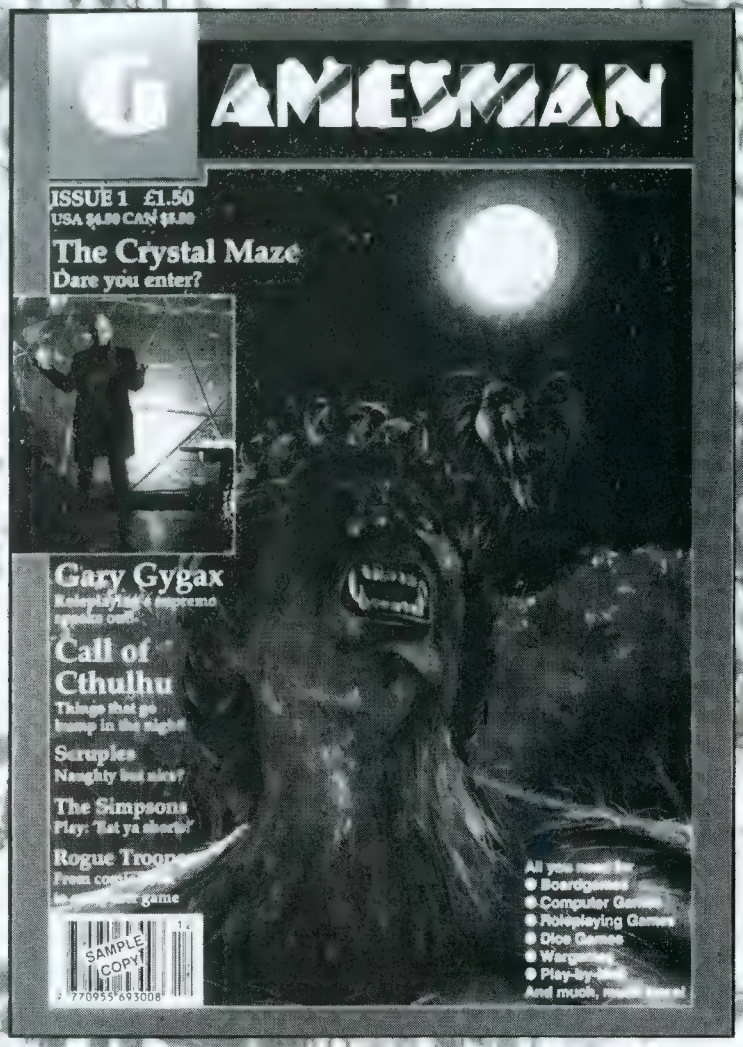
Continued page 26

UMS 2 was designed by Ezra Sidran and Intergalactic Development

It is published by MicroProse, price £34.99 (PC) or £29.99 (ST and Amiga)

The Planet Editor will be reviewed next issue

Q: Which magazine covers the complete games industry as never before?
A: Gamesman.



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ROONEY TUNES

Stuart Mitchell checks out two shareware strategy games

LONG, LONG ago, before the age of the personal computer, entertainment software was created by a few dedicated souls who had no thought of the commercial potential of their work (to be fair, there really wasn't any).

These early computer games were offered free to those who could find a hiding spot for them on whatever computer system they might be using. The original **Adventure** was one of these as was the classic **Star Trek** game and the immensely popular strategy game **Empire**.

Today in the era of personal computers, players can buy strategy software over the shelf. The graphics for these games are often superb, the interfaces state-of-the-art. Still, one can pay a pretty penny for these glossy new packages and still be left vaguely dissatisfied. Fortunately, there is another outlet for strategy games: shareware. Shareware software is offered to the user on a trial basis. No initial cost is paid, but a registration fee is asked for if the user is happy with the software. This gives players a no-risk way to evaluate new software and decide if it is to their taste.

Steven P Rooney has created two new strategy games under the shareware concept. The games are available in a limited play form for free. The complete products can be had for the registration fee (which fee is still much less than the price of commercial software). Best of all, both of Mr Rooney's products provide a lot of fun. The first game, **Super Powers 6**, offers players a chance to rule the world in a hypothetical confrontation in the near future. The second game, **Sea Bat** 2, simulates naval conflicts from the first and second World Wars.

SUPER POWERS 6

In **Super Powers 6** players lead one of six world super powers: The United States, Europe, South America, the Middle East (including Africa), Asia, or the Soviet Union. The object of the game is to achieve world domination through economic or military superiority (or a combination of both). In the shareware version, players may only play the Soviet Union. Players must build up their economic infrastructure, then arm for the inevitable military confrontations.

Super Powers 6 is largely driven by tables. Each turn players view the overall status of their power bloc. This status reports the quantity of resources (raw materials) on hand and what mines players have to generate new resources. The basic idea is that resources are used to create more mines which in turn generate more resources. There are several resources, each of which is used in different ways. For instance, iron is used to produce steel, coal is used to generate power (and income), and oil is used by all the various motorized vehicles in your economy. The one tricky aspect to all this is money which is generated, oddly enough, from left-over coal and gas. Strange as this seems, it is actually a rather elegant simplification. In essence, the game assumes that energy resources are consumed by economic processes which generate money. Thus, if players have mined a considerable quantity of coal and only used a portion of it to create other resources (such as steel),then the it is assumed the economy will burn the rest in money generating activities.

In addition to creating resources and money, players must also build an infrastructure for moving and using their resources. Naturally, building this infrastructure also requires resources. The core of the game is learning the inter-relationship of the various resources and the costs to build various items. Players are given five turns grace to build an economy in peace. Starting with the sixth turn, players may be attacked at any time. Of course, they may wish to launch an attack of their own.

To wage war, players must convert resources to military production. Military production and money will allow players to create an army and navy. In the shareware version, the player's country cannot build strategic nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, their opponents can. Still, there is enough to worry about even with conventional arms. Wars are best waged in blitzkrieg fashion with quick victories. Protracted conflicts will only wear down a player's forces, making them ripe for plucking by another country. World domination is generally achieved through successive military victories. A victory is scored when the player completely destroys an opponent's army and

SUPER POWERS 6

Designed by Steve Rooney

Price £9 (registered)

Available for the PC

CGA

navy. A defeated country cannot attack (or be attacked) for six turns after their defeat. Note, however, that the player's own country will substitute a computerized leader for the player should that country ever be defeated. Might makes right!

Super Powers 6 is essentially a game of numbers. Players who enjoy games like **Imperium** or **Reach for the Stars** will likely enjoy this game. However, there are some problems with the game. The first one is the interface. Everything is done via single keystrokes. This is nice, however there are *no* on-screen prompts or menus for these keystrokes. Players must look at the on-line help to find out what they can do. Or better yet, print out the help files and reference them while playing.

The documentation itself is a weak point. The instructions declare that the player's goal is world domination through economic and military superiority. But there is no explanation as to how superiority is determined. Economic superiority is particularly opaque. I finally gave up worrying about it and focused my attention on the systematic obliteration of my opponents.

One other minor problem is the difficulty levels. There are three difficulty settings. At the simplest settings, victory is rather mindless (once one understands the game). At the medium difficulty level, victory should be achieved consistently, but it will be a challenge. At the highest level, I found no way to win. I suspect the lack of strategic weapons is the culprit here, but it is still frustrating.

Even with these reservations, I strongly recommend **Super Powers 6** to those who enjoy economic/military strategy games. The game should be particularly appealing to those who like to finish a game in a sitting. A typical game of **Super Powers 6** can be completed in about an hour. One last note, the registered version of **Super Powers 6** supports multiple players. I suspect the game will really blossom with six human opponents.

SEA BAT 6

Sea Bat 6 is simulation of naval actions in the first and second World Wars. The shareware version of the game comes with four scenarios. In the shareware version players may only assign the computer to play one of the two sides in each scenario. The registered version includes eight scenarios and the computer may be assigned to either side. A hardcopy manual is available for a slightly higher registration fee. Additional scenario disks are also available.

Sea Bat 6 allows players to control naval and air forces at several levels. First, in simple surface actions players direct their ships movement and choose targets for each ship. In scenarios with air power, players must direct reconnaissance planes, fighter planes, and bombers. Finally, players may also direct land-based airpower against enemy naval forces.

Much like **Super Powers 6**, **Sea Bat 2** is largely a text-driven game. Some rudimentary graphics are provided for aerial bombing of surface vessels and for a map, but by and large the game takes place in tables of numbers. In this era of high-powered graphics, many players may find this approach off-putting. Personally, I didn't mind it and in fact found the lack of glitzy clutter rather refreshing.

The four scenarios in **Sea Bat 2** provide a nice variety of situations. In the 'Grafspe', players take the helm of the Admiral Graf Spee against three British cruisers. In 'MidwayI' players sail a small Japanese task force with two aircraft carriers against a similar American task force. 'Hoodend' pits the player's German battleship and cruiser against a similar British force. Maltahlp has the player's Italian fleet operating in conjunction with land-based air forces against a British convoy leaving Malta for Alexandria. Once players learn the basic system, all four scenarios can be beaten consistently. However, the scenarios available in the registered version offer considerably more ships and aircraft and should prove more challenging.

Game play is straightforward. Players give orders to each ship in their forces, selecting them from a menu. Direction and speed are given for each ship. If a target is spotted and in range, the ship may fire at it. The game automatically determines how many guns can be brought to bear based on the angle of the firing ship to its target. Rounds fired and fuel expended are tracked, though these play no real part in the short scenarios provided.

Orders are also issued for any aircraft in the scenario. Aircraft may be carrier or land-based and come in three types: reconnaissance, fighters, and bombers. Recon aircraft can be sent to patrol a quadrant. The extent of their scouting depends on the range of the aircraft. Fighters can fly CAP or be sent as escorts for bombers. Bombers may only be sent against spotted enemy ships. Once they have flown a mission, aircraft must stand down for refueling and rearming. Players must carefully consider the requirements for attack and defense and the launch capacities of their bases and carriers.

Once all orders are issued, combat and movement are resolved by the computer. For surface ship engagements, there is an initial firing round, then movement, then a second round of firing. For air combat, first all combat between CAP and attacking aircraft are resolved. If any attacking planes make it through the CAP, anti-aircraft fire from targetted ships is calculated. Any remaining bombers then resolve their attacks on their target. Note that all these sequences are automatic. All the player does is watch the results of their orders.

Sea Bat 2 is a very streamlined naval simulation. Many considerations are removed from the players hands. Radar is figured into the spotting rules. Night attack odds are automatically considered when appropriate. There are no options to lay smoke, fire flares, etc. Only the essence of naval combat is presented. Purists may not like this, but I found that **Sea Bat 2** felt right as a simulation. It isn't a World War II **Harpoon**, but it doesn't have any pretensions to be either. And unlike **Harpoon**, **Sea Bat 2** scenarios can be easily finished in an hour or so.

As in **Super Powers 6**, **Sea Bat 2** is no graphic tour de force. What graphics there are serve their purpose and nothing more. The interface is, alas, rather odd. Much use is made of function keys, but again there are no menus. A complete printing of the help files is necessary to begin to make headway. The documentation is helpful, but players with little or no familiarity with naval combat in the first half of this century will be lost. For instance, there is no explanation of aircraft types, nor any mention of ship facing vis the ability to fire all guns. In fact, the bulk of the documentation is a description of the other scenarios available for the game.

Again, despite the shortcomings of the game, I found myself playing **Sea Bat 2** again and again. And this with only four scenarios! I would dearly love a better interface and larger scenarios. And even better would be a scenario builder. But at £13 I don't think one is likely to find a more entertaining simulation. My hat is off to Mr Rooney for two fine examples of the shareware concept at its best. May he receive all the registrations that are his due. SP

SEA BAT 2

Designed by Steve Rooney

Price £13 (registered)

Available for the PC

CGA, EGA

Requires 512K RAM

Registered versions of both programs are available via *Strategy Plus*. See the ad on page 46

The ABC of PCs

Brian Walker and Paul Mason explain the 'P's and 'Q's

The emergence of the IBM PC as the optimum games machine (circa 1991) has taken everybody by surprise, not least the many dealers who sell them. The reaction upon being told that their machines are used for playing games verges on incredulity: 'But this is a business machine,' they will splutter, as though to regard it as anything else is an unspeakable crime. Nevertheless, the 'clones' are capable of producing better sound and graphics than almost any other hardware currently on the market. Unfortunately, however, it's not simply a question of sticking your disk in the drive and boots your uncle. For even in a world of shifting standards the PC is a law until itself. The truth is there is no such thing as a 'standard PC'. Instead there are different graphic standards, different processing speeds, different RAM configurations, and most confusing of all, the arcane world of MS-DOS. But how does it all hang together? In this article we hope to shed some light on the strange yet wonderful environment of the IBM PC, while at the same time offer some advice on what you need to take maximum advantage of the software available.

Interfaces

Most non PC users expect to use a mouse as a matter of course. Until quite recently, though, a mouse and the PC were strange bedfellows. Much of this attitude stemmed from a sort of MS-DOS macho ethos. Somehow, you just weren't a 'real user' if you used a mouse. Real users preferred command line interfaces (ie typing). Gradually thanks to GUIs (graphic user interfaces) like GEM and Windows, the mouse has become an almost accepted peripheral. But it's not just a question of plugging one in Amiga style. No sireee. On a PC a mouse has to be 'installed' in memory. The PC must be told it has a mouse attached so that it can go and look for it. Most PC games will recognise that a mouse is in the vicinity and react accordingly. A good mouse, such as the Microsoft serial mouse, will set you back about £90 which includes the installation software. Joysticks for the PC are such a rare sight that some even doubt their existence! But exist they do. However, you'll need something known as a 'game card' before you use one. The game card fits into one of the expansion slots on the back of the PC and the joystick plugs into that. These slots are what makes the PC such a flexible friend. It means that the machine can be configured to the users specification, unlike the Amigas and STs with their 'closed' architecture.

Graphics

One of the biggest headaches for PC users is the proliferation of incompatible graphics standards. The original PC was only capable of delivering lines of text: pictures were accessible only to those lucky punters who bought a graphics card and stuck it in the back. The earliest standard was the Color Graphics Adaptor (CGA), a means of producing chunky-looking blobs of colour. A black and white competitor, the Hercules card, emerged around the same time, and achieved some success in recent years thanks to being the standard on the mega selling workhorse, the Amstrad 1640, but few, if any, games support it, and the poor old Amstrad 1640 is now best put to use as a doorstop.

The big advance in graphics came with the Enhanced Graphics Adaptor (EGA). Suddenly the PC didn't look *quite* so naff in comparison with all those STs and Amigas.

EGA is still the basic graphics standard for PC games. Be warned, however, it requires a special kind of monitor.

The PC finally overtook the cheaper 68000 machines (the ST and Amiga) in graphics capability with the release of the VGA card, and its 'bells and whistles' successor, the SuperVGA card. VGA, confusingly, stands for Video Graphics Array, and because it uses analog technology rather than the digital used for EGA it requires a different kind of monitor. The main problem with VGA is that, unlike EGA, it doesn't have a single standard. The PC demon of incompatibility raises its ugly head once more: different flavours of VGA may or may not be successfully driven by a piece of software. A word here about MCGA, which has nothing to do with CGA, but is a VGA 'variant' used by IBM on their PS/2 series. To all extents and purposes it functions just like VGA, though it has more colours.

VGA is the 'new standard' for PC graphics. All but the cheapest of budget machines will be supplied with it at minimum, and, thankfully, VGA cards are capable of running games designed for EGA and even CGA.

Exceeding even SuperVGA in quality is IBM's attractively named 8514/A graphics standard. There aren't any games for it yet, and setting up a computer with it will set you back an outrageous amount of money, but things move fast: next time we do this feature it could have become the new standard!

Thanks to the modular nature of PCs it's quite easy to improve a PC's graphics. Simply identify which of the boards plugged inside the computer is the graphics card (it'll usually say something like 'Paradise VGA' on it), rip it out and stick in the new one. Then plug in a monitor which can handle the output from that card. Finally, the PC must be told about the new card, by using its inbuilt SETUP utility (this varies from machine to machine) and/or by running the installation programs which come with the card.

Sound

The PC speaker is legendary for the disgusting squawk it emits. This posed a problem for PC games, especially those in the adventure or flight simulation genre. Programmers and designers gradually became aware that evocative soundtracks and effects could enhance the plot/simulation enormously. Enter the soundcard: a soundcard is able to locate and translate the sound code written into the program. Installation is simple: one end of the soundcard plugs into an expansion slot while the other connects to (optimally) an hi-fi amp or indeed even a ghetto blaster. Result: top quality sound from your game capable of equalling that of a CD. At the top end of the range are the Rolands. The price, however, is a stonking £330. The reason for this is that it also comes with a sophisticated MIDI interface which can (and is) used for professional voice and music synthesis. For the games player without musical aspirations the Roland must therefore be considered a luxury. The best supported card is the AdLib which can cost as little as £99. The sound can be a little fuzzy at times but it is still excellent value. The disadvantage with the current Adlib is that it does not contain a DAC which means it cannot translate digitised speech. For this you will need a SoundBlaster or a Sound Master II. The 'SB' supports digitized voice output and input, a 12-voice C/MS stereo music synthesizer, and the clincher – it comes bundled with Talking Parrot software. The RRP on the SoundBlaster is around £170. Similar to the SoundBaster is the Covox Sound Master II, which is AdLib compatible and is capable of reproducing digitised speech. Other features on this board include a DMA digitiser, a 100% MIDI compatible interface, a music composing program, multi-voice FM music synthesiser, and if that isn't enough, it's CD ROM software compatible. The RRP on the Sound Master II is £179.95. Due for release any day now is the AdLib Gold, the assumption being that this will contain a DAC. All the boards mentioned here do an excellent job. The current AdLib is beginning to show its age now, so the SoundBlaster or the Sound Master II would be the boards to go for if just required for use with games.

Hard disks

One of the best features of the PC for gamers is the provision of a hard disk. Normally these are included as a part of the package. The great advantage of playing games from a hard disk is that it eliminates tedious disk swapping, plus it provides such a comfortable home in its subdirectories for all those expansion disks. But as the games get bigger, then so must the hard disks. Once upon a time a 40Mb hard disk was considered as roomy as the Sahara desert. Now, games like **Kings Quest V** and **Wing Commander** take up 10 megabytes each! Prices for a 200Mb hard disk start at around £600.

Processing speed

PC speed is usually measured nowadays in megahertz (MHz for short). Unfortunately it's not quite as simple as looking at the number. 'Landmark' speed is not the same as 'clock' speed. In general it's simplest to ignore everything but the clock speed. The original IBM PC ran at 4.77MHz. When it was souped up into the XT (a term which generally applies to most low-end PC compatibles) the speed edged up to about 8MHz. These machines used the 8086 and 8088 chips. When the superior 80286 chip arrived on the scene, the PC AT was born. Speeds now started at 10MHz and edged up towards 16MHz. The standard at the moment, however, is the 80386 chip. This comes in two varieties, the SX and the DX, but the difference is only really important to those intrepid explorers outside the safe realm of MS-DOS. All the games that we cover run under MS-DOS. Increasingly games require more processing speed: **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe**, for example, won't run on a 286! 386 SX machines run at 16-20MHz, while a DX can reach the dizzy heights of 33MHz. Faster even than this are the awesome machines based on

the 80486 chip – and it won't be long before the 586 starts appearing in the shops! Until a new generation of games using UNIX or OS/2 appear, these will be unnecessary luxuries for the gamer.

RAM

Random access memory. Random indeed. Most PCs now come with at least 1 meg of RAM on board. Unfortunately PCs using MS-DOS can only access 640K of that by 'natural' means. Generally this will be enough to run most games. The manual should tell you exactly how much RAM is needed. To see how much you have available type 'chkdsk'. If you don't have enough then insert your DOS system disk in the drive and reboot. This will circumvent any RAM eating TSR (terminate and stay resident) programs such as mouse drivers. Occasionally, though, games appear which give a new meaning to the word 'hungry'. **Links**, for example, would like to consume 4 meg of RAM! This would enable it to spew out its spectacular graphics and sound effects, and also ensure that the screen redraws at a respectable speed. The publishers of **Links** have thoughtfully included a memory management program with the game. When accessed, this program will inform your computer that more RAM is available if it wants it. **Wing Commander** is another game which also makes use of EMS (expanded memory). If you don't have a memory manager program we would recommend Quarterdeck's QEMM.

Cost

So what exactly does all this cost and how 'future proof' is it? For a 16MHz 386 SX with VGA which is fast enough to run most games and have something to spare, you would be looking at a absolute minimum of £850 (excluding VAT). Most decent machines meeting this specification, and including a fast hard disk and monitor will be priced at £1500+.

Few games take advantage of the special characteristics of the 386 chip, so a 386 machine automatically has a certain amount of 'future proofing'. However, to plan for the future you realistically need a machine with plenty of 'slots' in the back for expansions (six or more if possible). After few years or so the PC market will have shot ahead in speed and performance, but it may be possible to upgrade a machine by simply ripping out the motherboard (which carries the chips that form the heart of the computer – the 80386 or whatever) and plugging in a superior chip such as a 80486. SP

THE MS-DOS ENIGMA

When people talk about 'PC compatibles', what they really mean is machines which use the MS-DOS operating system. This archaic means of enabling progams to communicate with the computer's chip has probably caused more headaches than any other single characteristic of the PC. It is MS-DOS which limits the PCs addressable memory to 640K. Memory management programs such as QEMM are required to make use of RAM greater than 640K.

More up to date operating systems OS/2 and UNIX don't suffer from these problems, but they require very powerful machines and, most importantly from our point of view, have virtually no games which can be used with them.

UMS 2 Conference, continued

a very long time. **UMS 1** is going on 7 years old now.

JF: I guess that what I am afraid of is some hot shot writer for one of theN computer magazines picking up an early copy of **UMS 2** and doing a hatchet job without ever trying version 1.2.4 or whatever we're on now.

CIS: We discussed the hidden units a while ago (just being global); do you still intend to fix that up so it will be for individual units?

ES: Mike Pash who is sitting here with me just said, 'I like the idea conceptually but I don't like the idea of programming it.' I think that this will have to be put on the list behind shipping the **Planet Editor,** the Civil War scenario and *Le Guerrier* Vol 2, #2.

CIS: The number one question for me has been how to speed the game up through the Master Control Panel. Which controls are the most effective?

ES: Step One for speeding up **UMS 2** is: get the free upgrade/download it from here on CompuServe. Step two is to free up as much RAM as you can (no TSRs, lower version of DOS, and so on). Step three: set Unit Visibility to zero.

*CIS: When I first got the Amiga version of **UMS 2**, I did the usual thing and booted it up, loaded the biggest scenario, set all the players to computer control, and watched to see how it would run. My very first impression was that the computer had hung. It took me a little while and investigation to notice that, say, setting reports on, and watching at the unit level, a zillion things were actually taking place at lightning speed, faster than I could digest, in fact.*

I suspect that some reviewers may, under time pressure, stay with that first kind of impression. Do you have any suggestions on how to overcome this 'first impression' hurdle?

ES: Time! We find that people are still using **UMS 1** all over the world. The **UMS** series was not designed to be 'played' for a week or two. It's a serious simulation engine and (luckily) we attract a serious wargaming crowd.

CIS: So you're not concerned about the other kinds of responses?

ES: Of course we're concerned; that's why we're here 75 hours a week answering user questions. But we've been getting so much positive mail and attracting a lot of *good* responses too. I think this project is going to turn out very well with a lot of happy users, programmers and publishers.

CIS: I would also like to wind up now and thank Intergalactic Development for their very informative involvement here on CompuServe.

ES: I would just to add that our phone number is (from the UK add the 0101 prefix) 319 323-5293 and we're here from 10am-10pm (BST 4pm-4am) Monday-Saturday to answer your questions. If you haven't received your newsletter please drop us a card at: 1427 Washington St, Davenport, IA 52804 USA.

You don't have to buy **UMS 2** to get the newsletter and/or enjoy it (I hope). And thanks for having me on the show. SP

CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY
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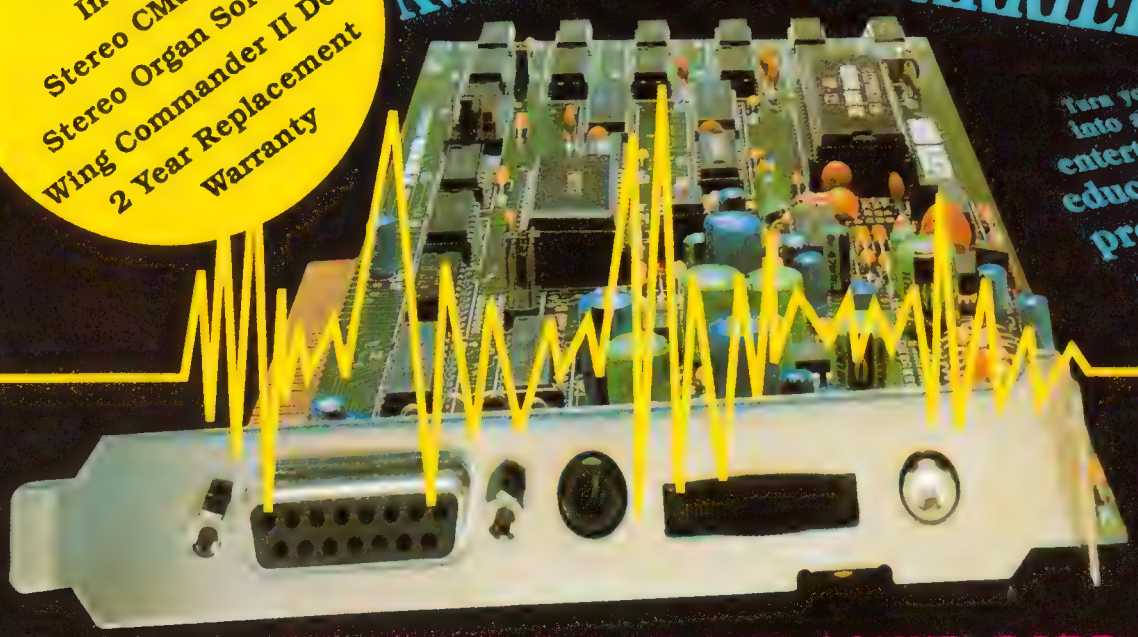

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Tel 0743 236605
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F-29 RETALIATOR

Advanced Fighter Comeback

by Paul Rigby

Designed by
Digital Image Design

Published by
Ocean

Price £34.99

Available for all formats
Reviewed on the PC

PC version supports all Graphic Modes and popular sound boards, mice and joysticks

Runs on 512K machines

F-29 RETALIATOR, from Digital Image Design (DID), out of Ocean, puts the player in the cockpit of one of two advanced fighter aircraft. Either the F-22 (based upon the YF-22 ATF – which has just been selected as the official ATF over its competitor the YF-23) or a militarised version of the NASA test aircraft, the F-29.

The game offers four scenarios: Arizona (a training scenario), Pacific, Middle East and Europe with a whole host of missions to fly within each. Small groups of missions are grouped within War Updates. A War Update is the current situation on the battlefield and is normally accompanied by a map and textual description. Each aircraft is able to carry a wide range of weapons from the factual to the factional. That is, weapons that may have failed to make the transfer from the drawing board to the world stage such as the much touted Backwinder which fires backwards at the enemy locking on to the aircraft's radar emissions. In a similar way to **Falcon**, the player is able to access all of the rank options straight away. Unlike **Falcon**, however, the rise in rank provides the player with more options and choice of missions.

Cockpit Viewpoints

In the cockpit the game offers all of the now accepted viewpoints, internal and external, along with three multi-function displays that the player can toggle to access a number of different radar displays and reports such as the present status of weapons, forward radar, horizontal situation radar, a satellite moving map, missile camera view, beyond visual range map, horizon indicator and so on.

Flight controls are comparatively simple. The player will not see the barrage of commands with complicated keyboard reference cards as one might see in **Flight of the Intruder**, for example. All of the commands and the method of flight are simplified to enhance the gameplay and ease of use.

Ease Of Use

On the subject of 'ease of use' the PC version of **F-29** excels. Installation is quick and simple with a single command being all that is asked from the player. In addition, there are a number of auto-sensing programs that select the best display and sound board. Similarly, once the player is in the game all one has to do is start using the preferred method of control and the auto-sensing program selects that controller for play. There are no drivers to confuse, no autoexec.bat files to cry over.

When it was initially released on the Amiga and ST, **F-29** was, correctly, panned for the large amount of bugs present within the system. Even after the game had been re-released with an update there were still features that didn't work properly. Digital Image Design were a victim of horrid deadlines which meant that they had to shift the program before, I am sure, they would have wished. The deadlines also meant that many of the proposed features never made the final game.

To that extent the PC version is by far the best version of the three. Many of the final quirks have been ironed out, although the game is by no means perfect. Improvements include a fully working radar an improved enemies. The latter specifically refers to how the enemy looks and how it reacts. The artificial intelligence has been much improved, too.

The PC version also includes an excellent option known as Head-to-Head. This is a one-on-one method of play fought over a null modem or modem. Basically, each player grabs an aircraft of his own. Each must be first to hit a series of targets before the other. Points are awarded for target hits and are docked for hitting targets that have not been designated. Of course, there is also the option to shoot each other down.

The PC version is also extremely smooth – even on a lowly XT, with multiple aircraft on-screen at once. Detail of both the aircraft and the game world is excellent adding atmosphere to the gameplay.

Scratch Model

There are criticisms though. The flight model is not up to scratch. While flying hard manoeuvres against enemy aircraft, the game forces the player to black out far too quickly. This particular journo has never flown a combat aircraft in a combat situation before but I am 99% sure that a pilot would be allowed to pull serious g-force for a good few seconds before blackout even approached.

Secondly, although an improvement over the ST and Amiga versions, the flight model is still too sensitive, making control a tenuous affair. The player never experiences the inertia of flight or the feeling that he or she is flying multiple tons of aircraft through the air. It is because of this that **F-29** cannot be taken too seriously. Sure, it's fun, especially the head-to-head option. It looks pretty, too. However, **F-29** is more 'game' than 'simulation'. SP

DOCTOR! DOCTOR!

Sandy Eisen MD investigates a matter of Life and Death

LIFE AND Death II – The Brain is the second 'Surgeon Simulator' game to be published by The Software Toolworks. I have not seen the original **Life and Death**, but clearly a game in which players took medical decisions and attempted to operate on simulated patients was sufficiently successful (at least in the USA) to justify a sequel.

The first game covered abdominal surgery (appendicectomies and the like) and did not include VGA graphics. **Life and Death II** presents the role of a trainee American neurosurgeon in 256-colour VGA with digitised sound.

State Of The Heart?

Life and Death II is a very sophisticated product which has been designed and programmed to the highest standards to use the latest hardware facilities.

The game must be installed on a hard disk to run, as the software arrives compressed onto three high-density 5¼-inch floppies. Full installation requires over 6 megabytes of disc space. It is possible to install using less space, but only at the expense of running the game more slowly.

The blurb on the box states that a '12MHz AT or faster' is recommended. I ran it on a 25MHz 486 using expanded memory (which the program supports) and found the speed just acceptable. It was certainly not too fast and I dread to think how slow it would run on a 12MHz 286. It would not be desirable to run this game without VGA and a mouse, although EGA and a joystick are supported.

The designers must be congratulated for creating a very friendly and instinctive mouse-driven interface which effectively includes on-line help. The documentation is surprisingly and agreeably short, and very little reading is necessary before starting.

The main screen shows an oblique overhead view of the hospital plan. Clicking on a room takes the 'doctor' into that room for further information.

The textbook provides information about the conditions that the patients will have, and how they should diagnosed. The data is mostly correct and non-controversial, and has been carefully written in order to provide just the medical knowledge necessary to make the decisions required by the game.

There are two parts to the game. The first involves performing an examination on a patient, ordering various tests and using the information derived to come to a diagnosis. Treatment can then be ordered. This is easy as each diagnosis has its own treatment which always works. If it is deduced that the patient is a drug addict then click on the box labelled 'Refer to psychiatrist'. If this is correct then, bingo!, case solved and the next patient is waiting to be seen.

If this is wrong then a good ticking off will be the result, along with an explanation of what was really wrong (and frequently the news that the patient is suing for malpractice), and a referral to the classroom for a lecture on how to do better next time. After the lecture the next patient will still be waiting.

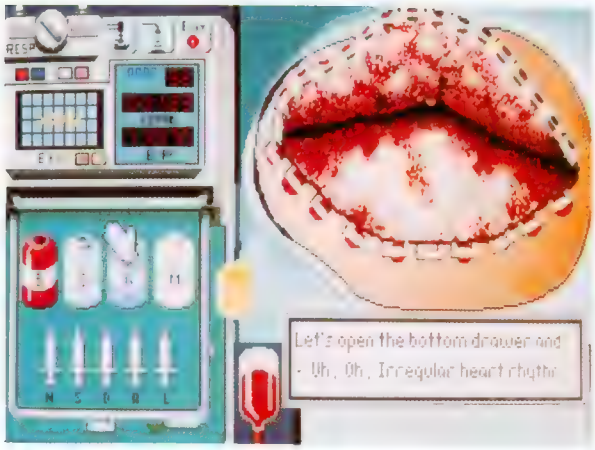
Scalpel Fun

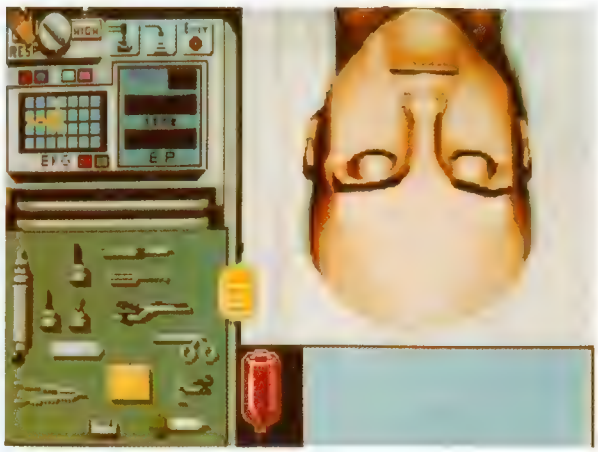
Three of the possible diagnoses require surgery as the correct treatment. If the doctor wishes to order one of the three operations, then clicking on its box provides entry into the operating theatre with a tray of surgical instruments on one side of the screen and the patient's shaven head on the other. Clicking on an instrument allows it to be picked up, and then used on the patient. If the right sequence of instruments is used in the right places then the operation is completed.

Effectively **Life and Death II** has two very different parts; diagnosis and operations.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis game initially appears well implemented. After clicking on the patient's room the patient can be viewed lying in bed. Like most of the graphics in **Life and Death II**, there





is some animation. However this animation is mostly small scale and irrelevant to the gameplay; the patient blinks intermittently.

The next step is to click on a clipboard to read a very short summary of the patient's history. Now examine the patient's head, arms or legs by selecting the chosen area. On the next screen pick up a tool and click in the right place to use it. For example a tendon hammer will elicit a knee-jerk reflex if used adjacent to the graphic of the knee on the screen depicting the patient's legs. The reflex may be normal, exaggerated or absent.

The possible results are a reasonable simplification of the much more variable (and less clear-cut) process of real-life examination. If the attempt to spot what sort of reflex the patient had failed, then check on the summary which is provided for all parts of the examination which have already been completed.

I was impressed and enjoyed 'examining' my first dozen or so 'patients'. Unfortunately after this my interest and satisfaction waned. Several problems caused this. Firstly there are simply too few different patient faces and stories. This means that there is no sense of encountering real individuals. The same face as the one on the third previous patient together with the same story as the fourth one back soon makes it clear that random permutations of the same few possibilities are being encountered.

Secondly, there are too few different diagnoses. After four or five drug addicts and a similar number of patients with migraine boredom creeps in.

Thirdly, there is no way to avoid having to go through the full and time-consuming examination procedure every time. I soon found that I was wishing for a summary of the examination results to be instantly available, since the procedure had become a chore to be done as fast as possible.

Operations

The surgery game appears to have the potential to be considerably more complex and challenging. However I must admit that I have not yet managed to get it to work. This review is based on version 1.1 of the game, and in the States the current version is 1.3 which has only just become available over here.

Whenever I tried to operate I was unable to even start the incision without the program dropping me back to the main hospital and a new patient.

The problem is not helped by a shortage of patients suitable for surgery. Just before sitting down to write this review I tried yet another session to see if I could actually start an operation. Patient after patient had migraine, or hysteria, or some sort of drug addiction. After 12 in a row with non-surgical diagnoses I gave up.

As far as I can gather the process of operating involves using the right sequence of instruments correctly. It is probably a test of mouse manipulation skills and memory. This probably results in something which may be rather similar to an arcade game, although this is speculation. Finishing just one operation is sufficient to put you into the 'Hall of Fame' certificate on the office wall.

Conclusions

Readers must appreciate that this review is being written from the point of view of a doctor with experience of this sort of work. Such a perspective induces very mixed feelings. As an enthusiast of computer games and simulations, I have a desire to suppress the realisation that this sophisticated game is a crude oversimplification. I cannot say that I consider it a good game, but I did enjoy playing about with it. I suspect that it will be a success for similar reasons. Seriously-worded warnings appear in several places to advise buyers that **Life and Death II** is 'a game for fun, not education' and that nothing in the program is applicable to anything except a computer game!

This is nonsense inserted by the publisher's lawyers who are (reasonably) concerned about being sued by little Wayne's dad after little Wayne has drilled a hole in his mum's head. Wayne will testify that his mummy said she had a headache and became unresponsive just like the lady in **Life and Death II** who turned out to need urgent brain surgery, and Wayne's dad will have a fair chance (in the USA) of ending up with enough money to buy several mainframes.

Life and Death II is certainly highly educational for a general audience, and good education is fun! I find it hard to avoid the conclusion that **Life and Death II** is an educational package masquerading as a game, and that my own disenchantment with it arises because (on this topic) I would prefer still more sophisticated software directed at a professional audience. Despite the complaints mentioned in this review, the designers have done a surprisingly good job on a very difficult and different topic. There is a huge amount of medical information and background included which is mostly fairly accurate and clear. I would recommend **Life and Death II** to those interested by the subject it covers. SP

Designed by
Troy Heere

Published by
The Software Toolworks/ Mindscape

Price £34.99

Available for the PC

EGA, VGA

640K RAM required. Game supports EMS and XMS

SoundBlaster, AdLib and RealSound sound supported

TOP FUN

Steve Wartofsky Takes Off In Jetfighter II

YOU'D THINK we'd have had enough of this by now, wouldn't you? How many air combat simulations have shown up over the past five years? Yet, frightening as it may seem, the market for such simulations hasn't even *begun* to be tapped, for a few good reasons.

Most importantly, we haven't seen many simulations that really begin to catch the depth and complexity of the reality they are attempting to model. Spectrum Holobyte (along with Rowan Software, their British cohorts) have been the leaders in this regard, and are likely to gain new ground with their upcoming **Falcon 3.0**. Those few simulations that do seem at all realistic, like **Falcon** on the Amiga and ST, or **Flight of the Intruder** and **Red Baron** on the IBM, still leave much to be desired in the way of handling and terrain design.

At the other end of the spectrum, we haven't seen many really *pretty* air combat simulations. MicroProse's **F15 Strike Eagle II** and **F-19** are probably the top representatives in this category, with Ocean's **F-29** coming in a distant second. Great graphics can provide some of the real, fluid sensation of flight; no matter how good the flight model, if its visual representation is jerky or inadequately detailed, something is profoundly lost in the translation to computer screen.

Poor Combat

Another big problem has been that most air combat simulations do at best a rudimentary job of creating a rich, effective combat situation. Enemy plane manoeuvres are usually pretty straightforward and predictable (**Red Baron** is a significant exception in this regard), and mission linkage is, at best, abstract. Ideally, not only would one have the simulation reflect the removal of targets from mission to mission (so that SAM sites taken out in a previous mission make bombing approaches in the next easier to handle, for instance), but one could also include appropriate retaliatory response as part of mission design. **F-16 Combat Pilot** attempted the latter, and did quite well at it, in fact. Digital Integration just made it virtually impossible to get to the actual strategy in the design.

Finally, it seems clear that, in all current air combat simulations, there's been a definite trade-off of realism for visual and sonic flash, and vice versa. We have yet to see anything that really does high-end equipment justice in the way of total design.

So Velocity Development has much to contend with, if it wants to address gamers' current needs. In order to satisfy the dedicated players in this genre, the ideal combat sim must feature realistic-feeling elements like loss of airspeed in turns, changes in performance depending on altitude, appropriate modelling of angle-of-attack at lower airspeeds for different wing and engine configurations, proper representation of performance ceilings for both plane and pilot, and differences in performance of different planes, carrying different mixes of armament.

Given the widespread acceptance of fast VGA cards, 386-and-up systems, and high-quality sound equipment, this same sim must also come to terms with things like 256-colours on-screen simultaneously, smooth and effective 3-D modelling and light-source shading of all moving objects, high-quality dynamic samples of engine and munitions sounds, careful attempts to represent terrain and horizon diffusion under different light conditions, and so on.

Add to this heady recipe the fact that the ideal combat sim should have enemy plane and SAM performance that makes appropriate sense to an intent, experienced, and masterful player, along with a combat situation that works as well as any good, small-scale wargame, and you've got quite a design challenge on your hands.

The Adventure

So how does **Jetfighter II** measure up? In a word – almost. Fans of previous incarnations of this program, whether **F/A-18 Interceptor** on the Amiga and ST, or **Jetfighter I** on the IBM, will no doubt be delighted with some of the directions Velocity has taken here. Those who hoped for more in certain crucial areas, however, like mission design, aircraft performance, and bombing runs, will be disappointed.

One is already stopped short, for instance, at the opening menu. The game's configurability is rather rudimentary. There is a choice of the same three options there have always been in **Interceptor** and **Jetfighter**, for free flight, engagement in unrecorded single missions, or participation in 'The Adventure.' The latter progresses through various combinations of missions selected from the 125 available, based upon the player's performance in each mission. Difficulty levels increase as the player pushes the enemy south across the state of California, and the player's performance is recorded and rated at the

Designed by
Bob Dinnerman (RD Technologies), Matt Harmon, Moses Ma, and Tom Ptak

Published by
Velocity Development/US Gold

Price £39.99

Available for the PC

VGA, EGA, CGA

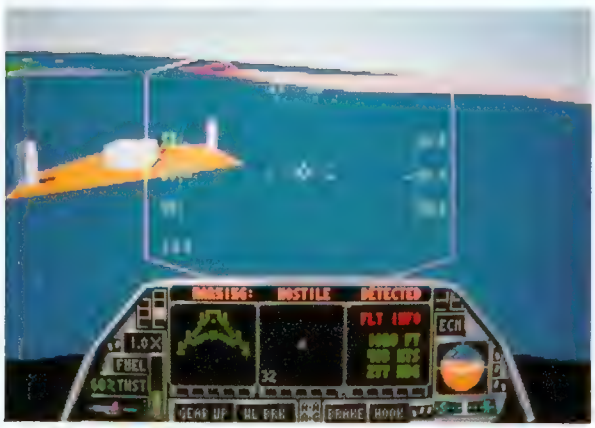
AdLib and SoundBlaster sound supported

The version reviewed here is not compatible with QEMM or Windows. However an upgrade (available free from Velocity) corrects this problem

end of a mission. Points are scored for mission objectives, and analysis of various aspects of performance (such as landings) are included as well, though the latter don't seem to affect the overall score.

Kludgy Difficulty

The improvement here is that, with so many more missions to choose from than were available in **Jetfighter,** there is more variation in 'The Adventure' from play to play; a good pilot will run through one combination of missions, a lousy pilot an entirely different one. The limitation, however, is that there are no options for changing difficulty levels. The game always begins on easy. The harder level can only be reached by successful combat. It is possible to make it more difficult by choosing less effective planes or armaments combinations, but this is kludgy at best. **Jetfighter II** is in dire need of a 'realism/difficulty' setting, *à la* **Red Baron**.



The other configuration options available upon start-up have to do with enabling or disabling the various graphics and sound features, and setting up the joystick. The joystick calibration routine is one of the joys of **Jetfighter II**. Like those available in **Flight Simulator 4** or **Flight Assignment: Air Transport Pilot**, it has options for adjusting sensitivity and null (or dead) zone. The stick's centre and limits can also be calibrated from within the program. Unfortunately, on some machines, at some speeds, with some card and 'stick combinations, the joystick won't configure right. One of the penalties of having to deal with an incredibly modular hardware design, I guess.

The program recognizes the AdLib (or SoundBlaster) sound cards, and makes appropriate and effective use of them. Engine sounds are full, throaty and useful as indicators of performance, and missile launches and explosions are adequate. **Interceptor** and **Jetfighter I** users will be comfortable with the familiar warning tones, sustained without change in **Jetfighter II**. My only quibble in the sonics department is that no attempt was made to support the Roland MT-32/CM32-L/LAPC-1 sound modules, which would seem a necessity for a high-end, pricy software sim like this. Also, all four planes' engines sound exactly alike; there must have been *some* advances made between the F-16 and the ATF23!

With a fast machine (a 486 would be ideal), all graphics options can be turned on without any real performance penalties in frame update. With everything on, graphics are lush and beautiful, even more so than those in **Red Baron**; horizons are diffused quite realistically, different times of day are illuminated in spectacular ways (dawn and dusk sees the sun and/or moon bathing the horizon in a soft, pastel glow, with the light fading slowly into the deeps of the upper sky), and the terrain is represented in realistic greens or browns, with the characteristic checkerboard patterns seen from on high when flying over cultivated farmland. There's even an appropriate haze at ground level, that gives the essentially flat terrain model a much more three-dimensional quality. This is territory you'll definitely enjoy flying around while in free-flight mode.

Note that a fast machine with VGA (12MHz or better, ideally 386 20MHz minimum) is required to get these graphics, though; **Jetfighter II** plays well enough at slower speeds and in EGA and CGA, but it's nothing like the treat it proves to be when dressed up in full regalia.

Satin Grey

The planes themselves – the ATF23 (star of the show), F/A-18, F-16 Falcon, and F-14 Tomcat – are spectacularly drawn, and have been light-sourced, like those in **Red Baron**, so that watching them manoeuvre in the outside views is a real thing of beauty. The Tomcat is an especial delight, as its wings sweep back when it gains enough speed, and its two-man crew can be seen clearly through the canopy.

The ATF23 is stunningly represented in satin greys and blacks, and looks like a real stealth fighter. Cockpits are different for all planes, and seem appropriate for the planes modeled. Like the earlier versions of this program, not much has been done to make the internal cockpits look at all realistic; but the layout is clear and easy to comprehend, and the multi-function displays (MFDs) hooked to the computer's function keys work well.

The HUD is also a compromise between appearance and reality; there's nothing like the detail or responsiveness present in Amiga **Falcon**'s pipper, or in the various weapons sights; but there *are* improvements in things like the aspect angle indicator and range marker, and the pipper's a lot more 'alive' than it had been in previous incarnations.

RAM Jerks

Continuing to speak of appearances, Velocity seems to have stepped over some video RAM boundary or other, because these vast improvements in VGA graphics design seem to have come at the expense of some jerkiness in frame updating. While **Jetfighter II** has some of the smoothest, as well as most beautiful graphics I've ever seen in an air combat simulator, under certain circumstances there's a 'hitch' in the updating every three seconds or so, that can prove quite annoying. This is one of a league of minor bugs in the program we'll get to in a moment.

Graphics and sound are nice, but that's just a start. Where **Jetfighter II** proves most frustrating is in the development of its flight model; there's enough effective improvement in the way of little details to come to terms with many of the criticisms of the past, but a number of things have been left in the design that make for a potentially less-than-realistic simulation. It's a real tease this way.

Most importantly, the planes in **Jetfighter II** now *do* lose some energy in turns, especially at lower speeds, which is as it should be. This doesn't come across as a significant factor at first in play (like many of the improvements, it's quite subtle in effect), but proves useful as one comes to know the simulation. With loss of speed comes a shrinkage in the turning circle's radius, and pilots can use the tighter turns to perform various reversing manoeuvres. Some of that process is now possible in **Jetfighter II**, though not enough to really make for a big difference in the outcome during dogfights. This simulation still remains one of the few where you can get into a tight turning contest with an

enemy plane on full afterburners, and manage to get on his six for a kill! Oh well, it is lotsa fun, if completely unrealistic.

The planes also lose speed in a climb, which is much more apparent and useful for game play. A real first is that the planes' engines will all flame out at altitudes beyond their rated capacity, which can lead to some rather interesting situations when an SU-27's in hot pursuit. It is necessary to bring the plane down a few thousand feet to restart engines and regain airspeed. This can actually be quite useful as an extreme manoeuvre if the pilot wants to get the enemy plane to overshoot.

Pitch And Splut

Speed also comes nicely into play when making landings. As the plane is brought down to its appropriate approach speed and angle (the ILS hairs work quite well, by the way), the nose has to be brought up for proper sink rate. Pitch determines speed, and throttle determines angle-of-attack, and the plane has to be brought in on a proper AoA in order to land effectively. This might make carrier landings sound even more difficult than previously, but in fact carrier landings continue to be the rush they were in earlier versions of this program. There is enough margin for error that it won't take 500 tries and reboots to get there, and a tricky yet successful landing after a long, tough mission can really round off the flight experience like nothing else.

I've always found landings in almost every other air combat sim the one weakness in the design. **Falcon** is famous for being the toughest, and even though the most recent Amiga incarnation is much improved, the tendency for the F-16 to drop out of the sky with the wrong press of a button, while probably more realistic, is just not much fun. **F-16 Combat Pilot**, too, leaves the pilot staring at an on screen explosion if they dare so much as a blink. **F-29 Retaliator, Fighter Bomber**, and their ilk, on the other hand, land their planes as if they were UFOs with anti-gravity attachments. **Jetfighter II** continues a time-honoured tradition of providing *just* the right balance between treachery and satisfaction. Others could learn from their lead in this area.

Another maddening 'almost' in improvements has to do with the bombing runs. **Jetfighter II** rests on the legacy of a design which is clearly *not* geared towards ground attacks. Bombing missions have always been an afterthought with Velocity, and **Jetfighter II** proves no exception. There is nothing in the way of advanced technology in the ATF to help out with dropping the MK82s and MK84s (then, too, you'd think they'd include slightly sharper bombs with a craft as slick as the ATF-23).

Bombing runs are, nevertheless, very exciting (despite little in the way of resistance while near a target), as the jet invariably has to come in low and slow, just barely missing the target as bombs are released right on top of it. I have yet to get blown up by my own bombs, by the way, even though I'm sure I've been right in the thick of a few of the explosions, another problem with the design.

Finally, in the way of mission design, the enemy planes haven't gotten a heck of a lot smarter than they used to be in **Interceptor** and **Jetfighter I**. There is an unfortunate sameness to the way the planes perform, for the most part, and it's clear that some of the planes are hard-wired into a sequence of manoeuvres that seem only slightly affected by the jetfighter's presence (until they are shot down, that is). Nothing so disheartening as knowing that the SU-27 which the jetfighter came so eagerly to play with is more intent on doing large, vertical loops, up to 52 000 feet, down to 8000 feet, up to 50 000... nab him just to put him out of his boredom. Velocity have clearly made attempts in the design of some missions to come to terms with these limitations, by varying the kinds of manoeuvres the planes are on; but it just becomes too quickly evident that there are Z80-based androids flying for the enemy. Later missions become a lot tougher, but the predictability of enemy flight patterns is still evident nonetheless.

Roach Motel

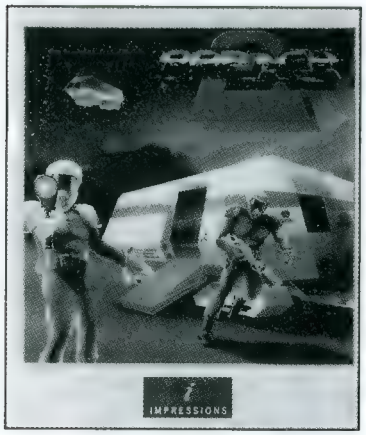
Now, on to the bugs. This is the 90s, and software design has become ever-more-complex. Nonetheless, gamers have come to expect software that has been thoroughly and ingeniously tested, with great imagination ('let's see if I can fly upside down through the top of the Trans-America Pyramid...'). Velocity is a very small company, with comparatively minimal resources, and on the whole has done a good job. There are some embarrassing glitches in some of the missions, though. For instance, in 'Roach Motel' you zoom down to the carrier, only to discover – oh no! – there's no ATF cockpit to land in! There's no ATF! Hey, there's no aircraft carrier deck! My, the Pacific Ocean is cold and deep... (an aptly named mission, maybe a joke?). Or, in another case, it's possible to turn the ATF into a winged dragon, oozling along at a mere 120 knots or so, with a MiG willing to hang quietly on the tail only a few hundred feet off, no matter how it manoeuvres. I'd rename this one the 'Wow, let's take some pictures of Americanski aircraft!' mission. As in previous versions, it's still possible to make a nice, 190-knot landing in a California vineyard and take a tour of Napa Valley by four-wheel drive ATF, dropping MK82s en route (all five feet to the ground, but they fly!). At least now, when off the runway, the ride gets *really* rough.

Finally, I must note what I consider a serious glitch in the design of the manual. Velocity (rightly, I think) pegs **Jetfighter II** as a non-realistic,

gloriously playable, shockingly beautiful air combat *game*. Then they turn around on page 72 or thereabouts, and start to throw plagiarised, highly technical fighter-jock talk our way. At best, this is disconcerting, and at worst, it will prove discouraging to the new players this software is in part aimed at. The least Velocity could have done would have been to include a few footnotes or a brief bibliography, to lead eager and curious thrill-seekers to the local library for more.

Perhaps this is indicative of a struggle at Velocity itself, between those wishing to push playability and those interested in some really serious simulation. If so, let's hope the latter win out for **Jetfighter III**. It's got plenty of glory, now all it needs is some guts. SP

Your First Impression



BREACH 2

- Nominated for strategy game of the year 1990 (STRATEGY PLUS)
- "A welcome breath of fresh air" (five stars out of five; PC Leisure)
- "A thoroughly absorbing close combat simulation" (ACE); "hugely enjoyable" (ST Format); "a superb product...it's just so addictive!" (Your Amiga)
- Omnitrend's Breach 2 is a detailed science fiction combat simulation, where you command a squad of marines through different missions. A true classic.

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- Buy ships, hire soldiers and explorers, and send ships sailing around the world to set up new colonies. Explore the new territory, discover minerals or natural produce, and build factories to produce goods. Then ship these goods around the world, to obtain the best prices!
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- "A strategy game with decent game play...excellent graphics...considerable depth and a style all of its own" (84% ST Format June 1991)

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BLITZKRIEG MAY 1940

- Ken Wright's most sophisticated WW2 game ever
- 2 different games — command either the Allied defence or the German Offensive
- "A hard, tough, thought provoking wargame with enough explosive play to make even the most hardened tabletop games sit up and take notice"

(Games Gazette)

- Historically accurate

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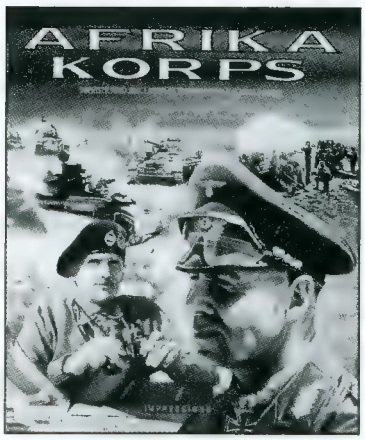

AFRIKA KORPS

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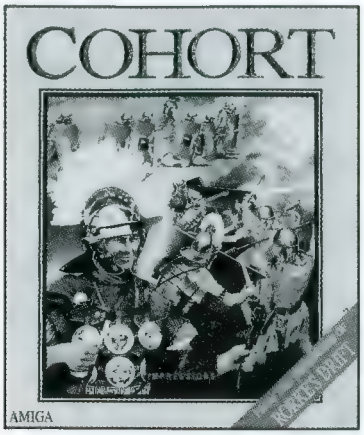

COHORT—FIGHTING FOR ROME

- "While Cohort has plenty of historical detail, its colourful graphics, entertaining animation, imaginative use of sound and flexible icon controls are what really makes it." (890 ACE June)
- "Very effective" (85% ZERO June 1991)
- "If you like Rorke's drift, you'll certainly like COHORT" (Strategy Plus June 1991)
- COHORT is the second game in Impressions' unique and extremely popular miniature-style war-game series
- Enhancements include group command functions, sound, multiple scenarios, user-definable armies, and more

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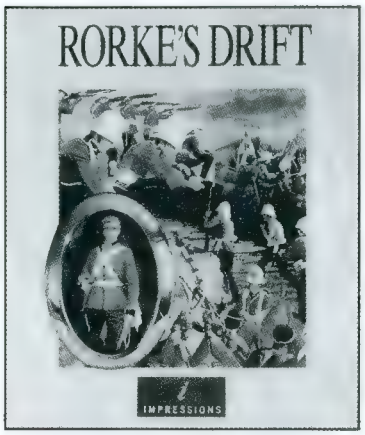
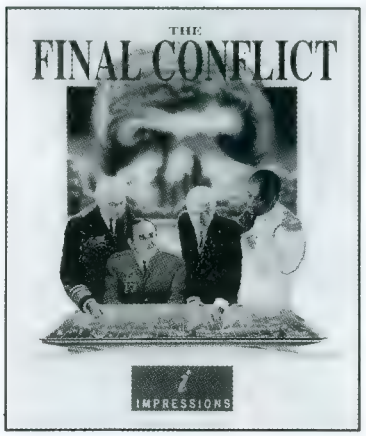


RORKE'S DRIFT

- This war-game faithfully re-creates the classic defence by a small unit of Welsh soldiers against an onslaught by 4000 Zulu warriors!
- This unique "miniature-style" computer war-game lets you control each man individually, in a bid to hold off against the Zulus against all odds.
- Phenomenally successful, Rorke's Drift is your chance to make history!
- "Incredibly playable" (CU Amiga); "The graphics & presentation are very slick" (ACE)

IBM PC, ST & AMIGA £25.53



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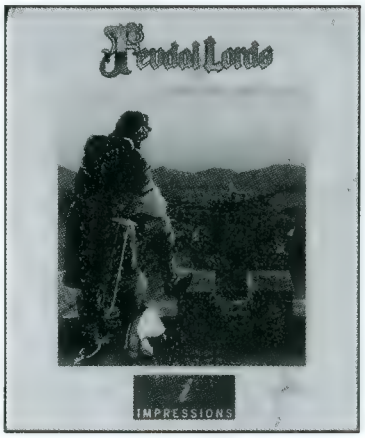

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- Play against the computer or up to 3 friends in a bid to rule the mythical land
- 3 types of troops; 3 types of battle (one interactive); seasons; sophisticated economy: alliances, mercenaries, assassins, plots, migration, investments, and lots more!
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WHEN SATURDAY COMES...

...John Harrington plays 3D Football and European Soccerleague

European Soccerleague: why accountancy isn't boring.

THE CRICKET season is in full flow. Come Saturday, the hardcore football fan paces restlessly across the living room floor. Cold turkey, they call it; the forced denial of an addiction. Slyly, a thought creeps into the football addict's mind. 'Hold up,' he thinks. 'I have a computer, and there's zillions of football games available. I'll satisfy my addiction by playing one of them.'

Boy, is he ever in for a disappointment.

There are two types of football game: management and arcade action. **European Superleague** is an example of the former and **3D Football** an example of the latter. Both of the genres sell very well, despite the fact that neither has yet thrown up a game that comes anywhere near doing justice to the world's greatest sport.

European Superleague was designed to be 'simply the best football game around'. Given the deplorable quality of the opposition this was not a very demanding design aim and yet somehow the designers have excelled themselves: they've actually come up with a soccer management game which is *worse* than the competition.

Purporting to be a soccer management game it is more of a time management game. Players take on the role of team manager whose job it is to coach players, decide on tactics, conduct transfers and, most important of all, keep the chairman satisfied. Peripheral elements include dealing with the press and negotiating player wages, but the core of the game revolves around finding time to devise and evaluate training routines. Each day the 20 players in the squad spend four hours practising shooting, dribbling and tackling. How long they spend on each facet can be individually determined for each player and the effects on the abilities of said player can be duly monitored. Players are rated (out of 100) for Ball skill, Mobility, Confidence, Fitness and Teamwork. Training seems to have the most noticeable effect on Ball skill and Fitness, but you'd probably have to be some kind of whizzo with beta values and other statistical mumbo jumbo to discern just how much impact each element of training has on each ability. What is apparent, however, is that players lose fitness through playing matches. Haven't the designers ever heard of the phrase 'match fitness'?

At the beginning of each week all of the training routines reset to default values which means the manager has to reinstate or initiate new schedules for all 20 players. This is the designer's way of forcing time pressure on the manager. It is also the designer's way of winding up the punter playing the game, thereby accurately but accidentally simulating the ulcer-inducing tensions of the football manager's job. It is, however, by no means the only irksome aspect of the game...

Probably the biggest defect is the number of disk accesses required. The main menu is depicted, as is the fashion, in graphic format, taking the form of a view of the manager's office from behind his desk. Clicking on various objects in the office takes the 'manager' off to a particular sub-routine, such as transfer dealing, scouting, setting team tactics or an interview with the chairman. Virtually all of the sub-routines require a disk access which lasts about two seconds. This gets more wearing than extended highlights of a game between Wimbledon and Crystal Palace.

The need to load information from disk so frequently indicates that there is probably a lot going on behind the scenes in this game but unfortunately most of it stays behind the scenes. A print option would have been a most valuable aid to analysis but is not provided. Meanwhile, information that would be worthwhile analysing, such as the match performances of the players or future opponents is not provided. The microscopic rule book does provide a thumbnail sketch of the tendencies of opponents (who are all well known European clubs such as Marseilles, PSV Eindhoven or Arsenal) and tactics can be set for each match, but presumably these tendencies are fixed for all time. While it is true that Arsenal have played the same way for sixty years, this is not the case for the likes of AC Milan or Glasgow Rangers.

On the plus side, **European Superleague** does have some nice touches in the tactical department, allowing you a choice from most of the modern team formations. Twelve tactical variations are also available, of which five may be used in any one match. These range from the generalised, such as 'man to man marking in midfield' to the more specific, such as 'overlapping full backs'. Judicious use of the right tactics can make the most of the players' abilities, but if the not unreasonable policy of picking a settled side to play to a consistent style is pursued you will be stymied by the insistence of the game designer that playing matches makes a player unfit. This smacks of a desperate attempt to throw some kind of problem at the manager other than the predictable ones like injuries and transfer requests. The fitness problem is exacerbated by another strange feature of the game, which is the frequent cancellation of matches which then need to be rescheduled. The rule book makes a big deal about this, emphasising the need for the manager to reschedule a postponed game when it

EUROPEAN SUPERLEAGUE

Designed by Matrix Developments

Published by CDS Software

Price £24.99

Available on the ST and Amiga. PC version to follow
Reviewed on the STe

best suits him, but is this really what managing a club is all about?

The match resolution itself is a massive anti-climax, but at least it is brief. Post-match analysis consists of nothing more than the score. No details on scorers, playing styles or good performances by individual players. Like the rest of the game it has all the atmosphere of a seminar on 'Why Accountancy Isn't Boring'. Indeed, it would appear that the whole game is aimed at the pen pusher who likes nothing more than coming home from the office and doing more of the boring administrative work he did at the office.

To escape from the stuffy confines of the manager's office I laced on my boots and entered the first-person perspective world of **I Play 3D Soccer**. This is an unusual arcade football game in that it dispenses with the convention of having the joystick-waggling player controlling the football player nearest the ball, and instead offers the opportunity to play the entire match as centre forward or any other outfield position. It should be noted, however, that it is possible to change the player under joystick control every time the ball goes out of play.

The refreshingly enthusiastic rules, which look as if they have been translated from the original Italian by an Anglophobe with a grudge against the English language, speak of stepping into the boots of Lothar Mattheus and leading the attack of Inter Milan. My first attempts at playing the game were more akin to Walter Matthau than Lothar Mattheus as I lumbered lugubriously around the pitch watching the ball flying past me at regular intervals. Then I discovered the joystick setting that raises the player's arm and has him call for the ball which, assuming the team retains possession, duly arrives. Collecting the ball takes a lot of practice, but once achieved, running with it is a doddle. Passing is a little more difficult. A short squeeze on the joystick trigger passes the ball to the nearest available team-mate, whilst holding the trigger down brings up a rifle-sight which can be manoeuvred into the distance, hopefully between the posts of the opposition.

Headers and overhead kicks are all possible although to date I have not managed to do either, but I have picked up a few bookings for over zealous tackling. I damned near scored a goal in one game too, while playing left back for Westham (sic). A replay facility is available at the end of each match which can either be seen through the eyes of the joystick-controlled player(s) or alternatively will be of the standard 'follow the ball' television coverage format. The replay feature is useful for spotting deficiencies in technique, but unfortunately there is no practice facility to enable technical flaws to be ironed out.

I do not know if there are any computer gamers out there who are into the esoteric delights of 'running off the ball' and 'drawing players out of position'. If there are, this game is for them. Out and out ball-hoggers will also enjoy it, provided they are patient enough to overcome an initially steep learning curve. SP

3D Soccer: More Walter Matthau than Lothar Mattheus

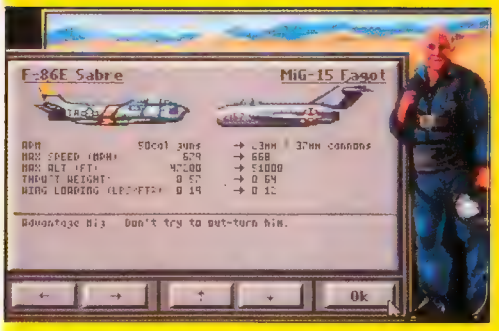
I PLAY: 3D FOOTBALL

Designed by Francesco Carla

Published by Simulmondo/ Impressions

Price £24.99

Available on the ST and Amiga. PC version to follow. Reviewed on the STe



Chuck Yeager Air Combat

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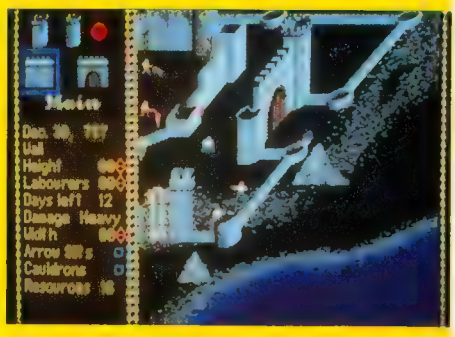

Castles

In conjunction with Electronic Arts, Strategy Plus is pleased to be able to offer readers free demo disks of **Chuck Yeager Air Combat** and **Castles** – the exciting new strategic role-playing game from Interplay. An IBM compatible with EGA or VGA and a 5¼" drive are required to run these demos.

Just write, enclosing an SAE, to:

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A House is not a Home ...

...until you've tried Domark's 3-D Construction Kit, says Paul Rigby

FOR MANY a year now Incentive's Freescape 3-D system has formed the basis of a whole host of 3-D adventure games. From **Driller, Dark Side** and **Total Eclipse** (**1** & **2**) to **Castle Master** (**1** & **2**). Here was a system that allowed the player to walk or fly through a three dimensional environment. He could look up and down at objects, move forward into buildings and back out of doors, interact with animated objects and so on. Which was all well and good – but wouldn't it be nice to create worlds? To build a city or a floating paradise, a desert island full of robots, a space port, in fact anything the imagination could muster? Well, plaster this wide-eyed correspondent with 57 varieties and call me Doris but hasn't Incentive, care of Domark, done just that? Yes, they can now offer that chance with the **3-D Construction Kit**. The kit is, in effect, an advanced version of Incentive's own Freescape system with a wide range of commands to enable players to create their own playable action/adventure.

The whole package is professionally presented with a sleek matt black box containing a single disk (on the Amiga version reviewed) plus a manual and a video. The video is not as bad as I originally feared. Rather than the sickly marketing exercise one normally receives the video offered a simple tutorial. All too brief for any practical use but an intriguing taster nevertheless.

Once the utility has been loaded the user will see the screen divided into two. On the upper area of the screen is a window onto the Freescape world (with a menu bar lining the top of the screen). Below this window is a bank of clickable icons that has the ability to shift, wholesale, to make way for a complete new set of icons necessary to access any other major feature. The menu bar does duplicate, in certain instances, the lower icons giving the interface more flexibility. On the whole the interface – an essential factor in a utility like this - was easy to use, even though there are a large amount of commands to access. One criticism is the GEM-like method of accessing the menus from the upper menu bar. As one moves the cursor to the bar the nearest menu drops down immediately, rather than waiting for a click to access it. This irritated me as I often moved the cursor, quite accidentally, to the menu bar while working on the 'world' window. Down came the menu which spoiled my train of thought as I struggled to get rid of the blasted thing.

Icon Sets

There are many features within the utility. The first set of icons that the user will use will probably be the movement icons. This is where one can move around the world in any conceivable way. Apart from the usual compass directions one can move up and down, lean to one side, move the viewpoint to just about any direction and so on. Moving through the Freescape world can further be refined by the step size which the user can vary or whether one wishes to walk in the first place. One can fly if one want.

The utility contains a number of basic building blocks that, unfortunately, do not include circular or tubular shapes. Anything else is present, however, from cubes to hexagons. Such a shape can be loaded and manoeuvred around the world. It can be shrunk, stretched, any or all of its faces coloured in any one of 16 different colours (and many extra shades) – in fact, moulded into just about any desired shape. Remember, though, as each shape is a building block it is possible to construct some pretty complex shapes with judicious planning. In addition, the possibilities of moving around an object in every conceivable way allows one inconceivable viewing and editing facilities giving one no excuse not to 'get it right'.

Once an object has been constructed many things can be done with it. One can place an entrance in

it, make part of it disappear if shot at, and a sound can be produced at the same time. It can be made to reveal a hidden object, trigger off an animation sequence, and so on.

In this way it is possible to construct many objects that are able to interact with each other to form a finished product that can span many uses and tastes from a leisure based, complex adventure to a more business-like simple 3-D architectural utility. The boundaries really are only created with the imagination.

Back to the utility. Probably the most powerful feature within the utility is the Freescape Command Language (FCL) a BASIC-type language that uses a procedural batch of conditions to enable a number of actions and tests to take place. The language is pretty easy and logical in its structure using as many English-type commands as possible. For example, imagine that one wants an object to become invisible if collided with. All one would type would be:

IF COLLIDED? {Have you collided with anything?}
THEN INVIS (4) {If yes, then object 4 will become invisible}
VIS (5) {Once object four becomes invisible you might want another object, say object number 5 to appear, as if by magic – thus solving a puzzle within an action/adventure}
ENDIF {Closes the procedure}

There are many more reserved words that can be used to serve a specific purpose. Obvious ones include DESTROY, SHOT and ENDGAME while more subtle words include MODE that alters the current mode of movement for the player from, for example, walking to flying. Another example is the trio – GETXPOS, GETYPOS and GETZPOS. As one may have guessed these reserved words refer to co-ordinates. This is how the program remembers where everything, in you world, actually is. In fact, on the status bar, you will see your present co-ordinate position alter as you move over the Freescape world.

In addition to the command language the **3-D Construction Kit** uses an Animation Object Controller to develop animation sequences for the on-screen objects. To animate an object you first have to flag it as moveable. You can add sound effects via the in-game effects library or sampled effects from an external source.

The **3-D Construction Set** is a most impressive piece of software that could, and probably will, form the basis for a steady stream of enthusiastic users in a similar way to the effect that **STOC** and **AMOS** had on the computing populous. There are so many variables on how and what you can create that this program should have a very large shelf life.

Interface Faults

There are criticisms to this product, however – mainly with the interface. The irritating drop-down menus have already been noted. The other observation I have though, and more of a constructive criticism, is that, throughout my short time with this utility, I yearned to take my mouse and grab an object on the Freescape World window itself, there to manoeuvre it and place it where I wished to by mouse movement alone.

I would have liked to have seen an alternative to the intensive menu/icon activity that has to be performed, right down to the finer points of polygon manoeuvring, with the addition of 'rubber-banding' forming a macro capture command. After all, the use of the mouse, in this fashion, gives the user more elbow room, more freedom of movement and thought, more imaginative spark and lessens the rather claustrophobic effect that stodgy icons and menus can give over a period of time. I would have also liked to have seen a simplified paint program included for touch-up and minor alterations – it would save using an external package all of the time. Hopefully, some thought may be addressed to these points sometime in the future. In addition, I hope that there will be additional support programs in a similar format to those produced for **STOS** and **AMOS**, this is critical to the success or failure of the product.

The **3-D Construction Set** is a bold move and one to be applauded. However, let us hope that Domark and Incentive get their skates on to enhance and improve the system. Creation utilities such as these are particularly dynamic in their nature. To use a gardening analogy, they need lots of love and attention to grow and prosper – otherwise they tend to wilt and die. SP

3-D USER GROUP

I have received good news that a User Group for the **3-D Construction Set** is in the process of being formed by the lady who wrote the manual, Mandy Rodrigues.

The User Group will cost £12 per year for UK registered owners, £15 for European based owners and £18 for users in the rest of the world. For your cash you will receive a free telephone helpline service plus a bi-monthly newsletter which is planned to span a minimum of 26 pages. The actual size of the newsletter, and the final success of the User Group as a whole, will be dictated by the feedback Mandy receives. Mandy is in the hectic process of collating the first batch of registration cards. In addition to the cards, however, she will need user's queries, hints & tips and, most importantly, software. The User Group hopes to be able to offer a large selection of PD software for the Freescape utility but the library will depend upon the contributions of the users. Suggestions Mandy has given include finished games, samples of borders and individual complex shapes. You can probably think of many more ideas. Contact Mandy Rodrigues at 67 Lloyd St, Llandudno, Gwynedd, LL30 2YP.

Designed by
Incentive Software

Published by
Domark

Price £49.99 (PC, Amiga), £39.99 (ST)

Available for all formats
Reviewed on the Amiga

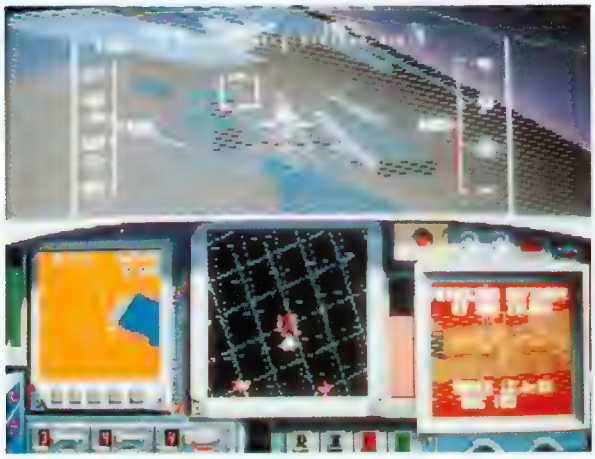
Desert Storm Scenario Disk for F15 Strike Eagle II

By Andy Hollis, project leader and programmer

So what's all this talk about a **Desert Storm Scenario Disk** for Microprose's **F15 Strike Eagle II**? Well, here's the straight scoop from the people who made it – as opposed to the marketing types: the new disk should be appearing in stores very shortly.

F15 II (and **F19** for that matter) dealt with hypothetical combat situations using state-of-the-art weaponry. The Desert Storm campaign has provided a real live situation using actual data that can be simulated.

Together with a trusty old copy of **F15 Strike Eagle II**, this scenario disk will allow players to live out the missions that made up this historic campaign. They'll be able to make the same type of decisions made by the combat pilots, and experience the same kind of excitement that a successful mission can bring.



Looks like a storm, Norm: F15 Strike Eagle II bridges that gap with Desert Storm Scenario Disk

So what's new? The most obvious thing is a whole new 3D world, with lots of new objects and targets. The area includes all of Iraq and Kuwait, the northern part of Saudi Arabia, and sections of Jordan, Iran and Syria.

The targets include fixed and mobile Scuds, early-warning radar sites, supply line bridges, the Air Defence Ministry, the Presidential Palace, chemical and biological weapon factories, nuclear development facilities, the pumping manifold at Sea Island, lots of SAMs and airbases, and Republican Guard armoured units.

In addition to the semi-random mission generation of the original game, a player can select one of eight specific types of historical missions, including Scud Busting, Baby Milk Factory, and Republican Guards among others. No more waiting for a 'really good' mission!

Desert Storm has shown exactly how the US Air Force uses the F15E in combat. To this end we have included all the appropriate weaponry. This includes laser-guided GBU-12 Paveways and MK20 Rockeye II cluster bombs, the updated AGM-65G thermal imaging Mavericks, and the AGM-88A HARM. Also, since the air force has still not approved the AMRAAM, the correct AIM-7M Sparrow is available for air-to-air defence. All of these weapons are new for **F15 II**.

The air force showed its preference for night missions during the campaign and we have added that capability. The VGA version with the gradational sky is stunning and adds a new dimension to the game. Of course, if you don't like it, you can toggle it off.

One note here: the manual incorrectly states that night missions are available only in the Desert Storm theatre. This is *not* true! All areas, including the original ones, can have night missions.

As if that wasn't enough, we decided to fill up some of the empty space on the disks with the North Cape and Central Europe theatres from **F19**. These have been available to owners of both games, but now **F15**-only owners can get all the available worlds with a single purchase. But be forewarned, these two theatres are *hard*! Attempt them only after honing your skills in the regular areas.

Finally, a few personal notes: the scenario disk was a real blast to put together. It was done during the period immediately following the war, when emotions and patriotism in the US were still running high. The thrill of being there through computer simulation is unparalleled.

In addition to the usual information on game mechanics, the 32-page manual gives a great background on Middle East politics and the Desert Storm campaign. I hope you have as much fun with it as I have.

RBI Baseball

Domark

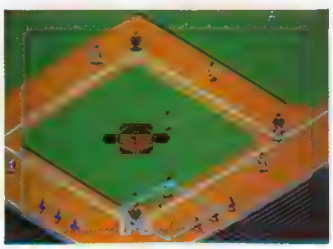
RBI Baseball is Domark's latest foray into the sports games market. The game features arcade and stats options. Twenty-six pro teams, each with a roster of 24 real players, are included with the program.

Stats for left-handed as well as right-handed pitchers/batters are allowed for in order to increase the simulation aspect.

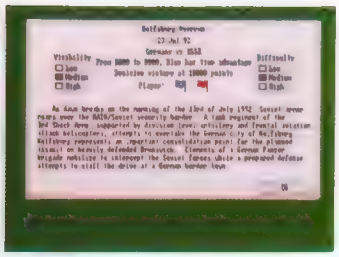
When in play, the 'camera' follows the flight of the ball and then zooms in to follow the batter's progress from base to base.

A 'radar map' at the bottom of the screen provides an overview of how the game is progressing. This allows the coach to decide how far the player should run, or if fielding, which base to throw to.

Close-up shots and instant replays of home runs provide the icing on the cake (*oops, wrong sport – Ed*). **RBI Baseball** will be released on all formats, er, anytime now.



Enough to drive you bats: Domark's RBI Baseball features 26 pro teams each offering a roster of 24 players



What the hex: Brigade Commander (left) is strictly a scenario builder

Brigade Commander

Electronic Zoo

Although **Brigade Commander**, programmed by the American based TTR Development Inc, uses a hex-grid it differs radically from the board wargames that favour such a system.

The first major difference is its real time nature. Second, the program itself is strictly a scenario builder – players must create their own scenarios.

Maps, individual vehicles, and units from any period can all be called up and customised, making it possible to recreate historical battles.

The unit specifications in the game are based on information in the public domain. To ease players into the system a comprehensive tutorial and a 40-page manual are provided.

TTL plans to release a series of data disks to support the game. The first of these, **Operation Desert Storm**, has already been completed and will be included with the basic package. The scenarios in Desert Storm are hypothetical to increase playability (which is just as well otherwise they may be a tad unbalanced – Ed).

Brigade Commander will be published in the UK by Electronic Zoo for the Commodore Amiga in July.

A wargame to end all wargames: Third Reich (left) is a faithful conversion of the Avalon Hill boardgame

Third Reich

Avalon Hill

Four years in development, millions of man hours at the monitor, Avalon Hill's mighty computer version of its classic boardgame **Third Reich** is now with us. And a first look at the game suggests that this will be the wargame to end them all.

Computer **Third Reich** is a faithful conversion of the boardgame – that is it is a replay of World War II on a grand strategic scale. Each game turn represents three months and is divided up into two *player* turns and then subdivided again into option selection, movement, combat, construction, and strategic redeployment phases.

The object of the game is to defeat your opponent by occupying the capital city of each major and minor power he controls.

Once the game is concluded the victory conditions will be examined and the program will advise who wins and by how much. In addition to the campaign game, three scenarios (1939, 1942, 1944) are included.

The map graphics and resolution, on the ST at least, are superb. In addition a full colour paper map of Europe is also provided. There is even a print option whereby a 'mini-map' may be printed out. Map scrolling is very smooth and accessing locations is as easy as invading Poland (*vladi Nora! – Ed*).

Third Reich will be released for the Atari ST and the Commodore Amiga in July. The 520 ST version will use a form of compressed data for the map which will have the effect of slowing the scrolling slightly.

The IBM version will be available later this year.

Napoleon 1

Internecine

The next game to appear on the Internecine label will be **Napoleon 1**, a command level game that runs in real time. It covers the Emperor Napoleon's campaigns in central Europe from 1805 to 1814.

The game is for one or two players. In solitaire mode the computer will play either side. Four scenarios are provided: 1805, War of the Three Emperors; 1806 Rossbach Revenged; 1809 Decision on the Danube; and 1813 Liberation of Germany.

Combat can be resolved immediately or tactically. A miniatures conversion program allows the player to print out the status of all units and the battle to be played with figures on a tabletop. The results of any tabletop battle has to be entered into the computer.

Napoleon 1 will be available for the ST and Amiga in early June. The IBM version is still in development.

Miniatures option available: Napoleon 1 from Internecine

Sierra aims to net the multi-player market

Sierra On-Line has announced the creation of The Sierra Network, a subsidiary that will focus on the development, marketing and delivery of multi-player games.

According to Sierra president Ken Williams: 'This is the culmination of a two-year research project to explore the possibility of creating games, similar to those which we publish now, where the game actually spans multiple computers. This would allow players to encounter each other during gameplay, sharing a common experience. Since October 1990, we have been conducting a test in the Los Angeles area involving about 1 000 users. Although the test only consisted of board and card games, it yielded amazing results.

'The idea of being able to find good chess and bridge partners anytime you want without leaving home really caught on. Many of our testers had never touched a computer before, but were suddenly averaging 20 hours per week *and more* on TSN.

'We need to "cable up" a city to provide the unlimited play at $11.95/month. We intend to do that any place we convince ourselves we can get 400 subscribers. Until your city is "cabled" you can play as a local call if there is a Telenet node around [most places] for $4.95 per month plus $2 per hour [includes *everything*]. We've already done much of California; additional cities will depend on where we get the 400 subscribers.

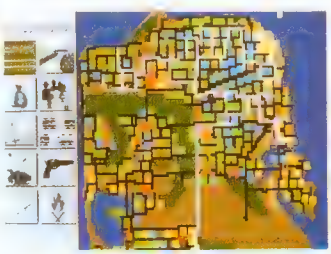
'As to additional pricing, it's a little complex. If you're paying the $2/hour we throw in pretty much everything we have to offer. If you're on a subscription basis then there *are* some optional additional charges. Your $11.95 gives you the core service: bridge, cribbage, hearts, backgammon, chess, checkers and the bulletin boards.

'When SierraLand and LarryLand are available they'll be $6.50/month extra each. If you want you can rent a mailbox for receiving mail – they start at $3/month and go up from there, depending on size. Additional services will be added as fast as we can get to them.

'As to performance – it's all you could want and more. I've played **Stellar 7** (inside Larryland) with four tanks and it was just as responsive as the single-player version. There are "never before seen" options like watching games in progress and graphic bells and whistles that'll blow you away. There's no charge for software – it's free.'

Strategy Plus asked Sierra On-Line UK if it had any plans to 'cable up' the Thames Valley. International manager Srini Vasan responded: 'At the present time the modem ownership in the UK would not appear to justify such a move. However, we will be carefully monitoring the response to our own bulletin board.

'If we find that the response is satisfactory then there is no reason why TVN should not be set up in the UK'.



Musique concrete? Infogrames gets ready to unleash Sim City on CDTV

Infogrames plans a CDTV City

Infogrames *(bonjour)* announces that one of the first games available for the CDTV will be its highly rated and absorbing urban planning simulator **Sim City**.

New features include an improved remote interface, a soundtrack featuring rap (yo!), or country music (yee-haw!) when playing in an urban or wild west scenario (these may be played through a conventional hi-fi system).

The bad news about this added soundtrack is that the music was composed in France.

There will also be four different eras with two scenarios for each, a zoom mode to show detailed close ups of the cities, 10 meg of new graphics, as well as a statistics page showing new information on the cities.

In addition, Infogrames is in the process of releasing specially reprogrammed versions for the CDTV of **Full Metal Planet**, **Drakken** and **Murders in Space**.

Following these releases will be a chess game (yawn). And after that comes the *mystere* **Radio NRJ**, about which Infogrames is currently saying *rien*.

Koei adds AdLib

Koei is lining up four games for release late this year. **Romance of the Three Kingdoms 2** adds AdLib sound board support – a first for any Koei game – to the struggle to control ancient China. The IBM version is due out in September; the Amiga version, in November.

Liberty or Death investigates the American revolution. It allows the player to be either Cornwallis, commanding the Brits, or Washington. AdLib is again supported. Available for the PC in October.

Turning to Europe, **L'Empereur** follows the rise of Napoleon and his progress across Europe. The PC version, with AdLib support, is due out in September.

Entering **Uncharted Waters**, Koei tackles the high seas, making the player one of the great sea explorers. The game can be played as an honest seafarer or a pirate, with the object of accumulating a vast (*there me hearties – Ed*) fortune. A December release is scheduled for the PC.

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Hardware

1) What sort of machine(s) do you play games on?

- IBM PC ☐
- Amiga ☐
- Atari ST ☐
- Mac ☐
- Other (give details) .....

2) If you use an IBM PC which of the following graphic modes and soundcards (if any) do you have?

- CGA ☐
- Hercules ☐
- EGA ☐
- VGA ☐
- Roland ☐
- AdLib ☐
- Soundblaster ☐
- Covox ☐
- Other (give details) .....

3) Do you own a modem or do you have plans to buy one?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

4) Do you plan to buy a new computer within the next 12 months, and if so, which?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

.....

5) Are you interested in the new Commodore CDTV?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

6) Are you interested in consoles?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

7) Would you like to see more coverage of hardware?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

Software

8) Which sort of games interest you?

- Strategy ☐
- Wargames ☐
- Adventure ☐
- Flight Sims ☐
- Sport ☐
- Boardgames ☐

9) On average how much money do spend on games each month?

- Less than £20 ☐
- £20–30 ☐
- £30–40 ☐
- £40–60 ☐
- More than £60 ☐

10) Where do you normally buy your software (tick more than one if appropriate)

- Mail order ☐
- High Street chain ☐
- Specialist retailer ☐

11) What is your favourite game?

.....

About the magazine

12) Which sections would you like to see expanded (be reasonable!)?

- Strategy ☐
- Adventure ☐
- Simulations ☐
- Boardgames ☐
- News ☐

13) What *don't* you like about the mag?

.....

14) Is there a regular feature or type of article you would like included?

.....

15) Which has been your favourite issue to date?

.....

16) Which has been your favourite article to date?

.....

17) Would you like to see ratings for games introduced, and if so, what sort of scale?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

18) Do you like the layout and design of the mag, and if not, why?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

.....

19) In which way do you think the mag could be most improved?

.....

20) Which other games related magazines do you read?

.....

21) How do you obtain Strategy Plus?

- W H Smith ☐
- Menzies ☐
- Local newsagent ☐
- Software shop ☐
- Subscription ☐

About yourself

We will not keep this information on computer – it will be used only in statistics

22) Gender.

- Male ☐
- Female ☐

23) How old are you?

- 12-16 ☐
- 17-21 ☐
- 22-32 ☐
- Over 32 ☐

24) When you're not playing games you are...

- At college ☐
- At university ☐
- In full time employment ☐
- In part time employment ☐
- On the Nat King Cole ☐

25) Annual income.

- £5 000–10 000 ☐
- £10 000–15 000 ☐
- £15 000–20 000 ☐
- More than £20 000 ☐
- Mind your own business ☐

26) Any other suggestions?

.....

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HUMBUG

Quiet Eccentricity

by Theo Clarke

MY COLLECTION is crowded with adventures set in gothic mansions with extensive grounds, absurdly convoluted catacombs and a maze of twisty little passages all the same. I suspect that Graham Cluley's collection is much the same. **Humbug** is the most entertaining text adventure that I have played since Infocom's **Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy** back in 1984. It is crowded with wit and challenging puzzles that open up to logical approaches.

Sidney Widdershins is spending a few days of the Christmas holiday at Attervist Manor, the home of his eccentric inventor Grandad. Grandad's neighbour, Jasper Slake, wants to buy the Manor and has suggested that the old man is more than merely eccentric. Given that Grandad dresses as Napoleon and claims that there is treasure to be found in the old house, Jasper could be right. Grandad is heavily in debt but he is a successful inventor. There is a time machine in the cellar and some very odd robots turn up in the most unlikely places. Perhaps there really is some hidden treasure and Sidney may be able to sort things out if he can only find the loot.

Attervist Manor and its grounds contain about a hundred rooms and over two hundred different items. The parser is robust and refreshingly obvious. Actions involve simple phrases and there appear to be no cases of the thesaurus-driven puzzle that can be an adventurer's bane. The logic of the game is inescapable; find a chimpanzee and you know that there will be a banana somewhere with which to bribe him. Where the links are not obvious it is possible to pick up further clues by questioning the rather curious characters that populate the game.

Quiet absurdity is the core of this adventure. There is Kevin, a camp robot shark built by Grandad. There is a Nim-playing octopus and a viking carrying a filofax. All of this daftness is tied together with an internal logic that seduces the player into Cluley's world.

Optimum Balance

The game achieves the optimum balance of challenge, charm, silliness and sophistication. There are all manner of knowing jokes about the nature of adventure games. For example, when Sidney enters a crypt he sees something trapped in a tube. Closer examination reveals 'a cuddly wumpus, a small round ball of a creature covered in soft pink fur. Over the years the wumpus species has suffered more than most. Misguided adventurers have been led to believe that wumpi are large fang-ridden creatures with a taste for human blood, and that Hunt The Wumpus is an honourable pastime. The truth couldn't be more different: the wumpus is a timid creature who prefers an evening in with a good book and Mozart on the hi-fi to mayhem and slaughter.'

Current wisdom is that people don't want to use a keyboard to play games. The same pundits claim that successful games have graphics. This has led to clumsy marriages of pictures to text adventures and to the sophisticated animated adventures from Sierra and their competitors. But there are some forms of humour that rely on words alone and **Humbug** makes the most of this.

If you don't like puzzles you won't like adventure games but there can be few PC gamers out there who won't get their money's worth if they send £9 to Graham Cluley, 'Malvern', Seaton Road, Camberley, Surrey GU12 3NG, UK and ask for the latest version of **Humbug**, specifying the appropriate disk size. You will also be sent a bonus game along with a map of Attervist Manor. Graham's bonus games are a **Tetris** clone called **Blox** and a delightful **Pacman** variant called **Wilf**. SP

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THE KILLING CLOUD

San Francisco's A Gas

by John Scott

SAN FRANCISCO, 1997 – not a good time to be a cop. With half the city under a hundred feet of toxic smog, it wasn't a good time to be anything, but at least we got regular holidays. In the eyes of the Black Angels, the only good cop was a dead cop – and that was one of the better sides to the job: at least with homicidal maniacs you knew where you were.

The Killing Cloud is set in a darkly futuristic San Francisco where air pollution has hit back. A permanent smog rolled in one day and killed off half the city, and now the air below 100 feet just isn't breathable any more. Since then a new life style has emerged in SF – a lifestyle that exists on the rooftops, and in high rise walkways and tramways. As if this wasn't bad enough, a wave of assassinations left the city leaderless, and an unprecedented crime wave hit what was left of the city. The culprits were the Black Angels – a confederation of the old street gangs. Now the cops have come to believe that the cloud is no natural phenomenon, but was created for a reason. By the Black Angels? It's time to find out and put a stop to it.

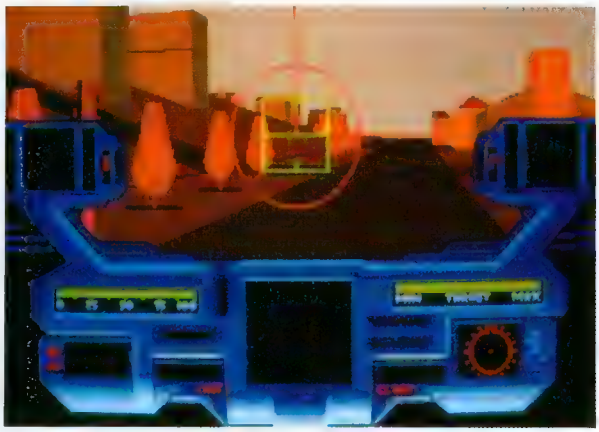
In **The Killing Cloud** the player takes on the role of a member of the SF Police Department, and moves from assignment to assignment, acquiring not only experience but also information on the leaders of the Black Angels.

One major piece of hardware is available to help the budding Dirty Harry. This is the XB500 hoverbike, a sort of personal vertical take-off and landing mini-jet. The hoverbike will zoom around and over the city in the best *Blade Runner* tradition, and is equipped with computers, Head-up display, communication equipment and, last but not least, 7.62mm machine gun and 30mm cannon. Unfortunately, the Black Angels have also acquired a number of XB500s and learned how to use them.

The game begins in the Briefing Room. Here details of the current mission are provided, together with details on the suspect. It is also possible to look at some 3-D reconnaissance shots of major city landmarks – you wouldn't want to get lost out there! One vital feature of this screen is the organisation of backup. Unfortunately, in this game, backup doesn't mean loads of screaming sirens and heavily armed SWAT teams. Life is a lot more lonely than that. In 1997 San Francisco backup consists merely of nets and pups. Nets are used to catch the felon alive, and pups are mobile, remote controlled holding bays – a sort of port-a-cell – in which the prisoner is transported back to the station house.

In the Briefing Room the player examines street maps of the city. He then decides where he thinks that the arrest is most likely to take place and deploys his supply of nets and pups accordingly. Once the cop hits the streets he must first load up a net into the hoverbike. This is accomplished by flying directly over the location where the net was deployed and summoning it by remote control. It will then fly up and become part of the weapon system.

From the Briefing room the next stop is the armoury. Here one scoops up as much ammunition as one can carry, together with one or two other useful little odds and ends, and then it's up, up, and away to do some good!



The view from the hoverbike shows the flat layer of ochre pollution with the tops of buildings rising above it. Not very exciting, but just dive below the cloud and all is transformed. The bike's infra-red system clicks in and the city of San Francisco is portrayed in loving detail – a bit *too* loving, perhaps. It is possible to turn down the level of detail to get a faster screen update (ie a more responsive hoverbike), but I found that even with the detail set at minimum the update was still so slow and jerky that it was difficult not to write off the bike against the side of a building.

This is the major problem with the game. It's only a problem below the cloud, but this is where most of the action takes place. The best tactic seems to be to stay at a high altitude and let the radar guide the bike to the suspect, then dive in and net him. Having ensnared the felon and read him his rights, a radio signal should call in a pup to bring him in. It should do, but unfortunately if the pup is a street or two too far away it won't respond to the signal, in which case you're up the creek without a paddle, Old Chum. Game over and all that. Honestly, if these methods are the best SFPD can come up with, perhaps they deserve to get creamed by the Angels!

Back at the cell the fun part comes as the suspect is interrogated. Here it's possible to get the creep to cough up some answers, though he may need some incentive, such as a reduced sentence. Once he gives the information needed then it's on to the next mission, until the power of the Angels is broken once and for all.

The Killing Cloud is quite a reasonable game, but a number of things spoiled it for me. The first was the cumbersome and annoying deployment and use of the nets and pups. The summary of keyboard commands in the manual was incomplete – this caused me no end of trouble until I re-read the manual. More serious was the slow screen update when flying below the cloud. This game reminded me, more than anything else, of a flight sim. One arms the craft, flies a mission, debriefs, gets another mission, just as in so many combat flight sims. It's a pity therefore that the flight aspect of the game just doesn't make it. If the cityscape had been a bit less detailed and the update a bit quicker I would have been inclined to give a thumbs up to this game. As it is, I'd rate it just above average. SP

Designed by
Dominic Robinson & Peter Featherstone

Published by
Mirrorsoft

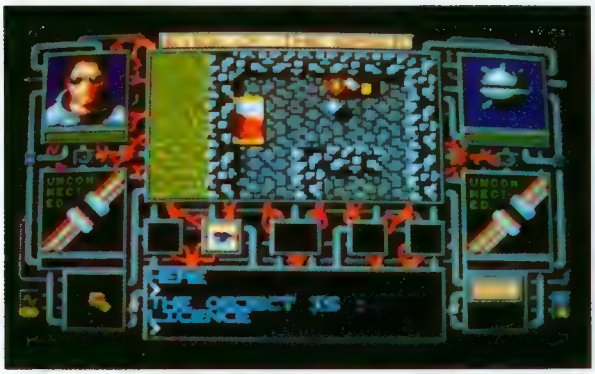
Price £24.99

Available for the ST and Amiga. PC version due in July
Reviewed on the Amiga

CHAOS IN ANDROMEDA

Cybernetic Showdown

by Maurice Thomas



CHAOS IN Andromeda is a variation on the popular computer theme of 'spacefarer meets troubled planet; spacefarer shoots inhabitants of troubled planet; spacefarer rescues important political figure, and receives undying thanks from galactic council.' Except this game is a whole lot more complex than all that.

On the first couple of attempts, I found myself frustrated by the game; all that seemed to happen was I'd bump into somebody and try to talk to them, then they'd kill me. Odd. The next couple of attempts found me having figured the combat system out, with the result that I'd try to talk to somebody, then I'd kill them. Still altogether unsatisfactory, until I worked out how to avoid people altogether. Strangely, after that the game began to evoke my interest.

Chestnut

The player's character is created using the hoary old chestnut of **Dungeons & Dragons** stats, with Intuition and Quickness thrown in to avoid copyright problems. He is then catapulted into the Andromeda galaxy, to do the bidding of the group known as CAMASC. Unfortunately, he is blinded by a freak accident en route, so CAMASC obligingly fit him out with a set of extra sensory gadgetry which looks uncannily like the front end of an Amiga display. This gives a top view of the terrain being traversed, an indication of health and so forth. By the flick of a synapse, another screen can be pulled up which shows what is being carried, whether stats are going up or down, and any malfeasant one may have tried to have a conversation with, in order that he can be fought.

Let's Get Metaphysical

All this cybernetic jiggery-pokery also means that the powers of the character's subconscious mind have, if he is wise enough, become operational (readers of Julian May take note). At the start this is limited to the basic ability of illusion, which more often than not goes wrong, but as the character progresses the powers cycle through psychokinesis, psychic shields, redaction (mind surgery) and creation. Sound familiar? All this is described rather charmingly in the manual as your meta-physical ability. I wonder if Wordsworth could move objects by the power of thought alone?

Maybe he couldn't, but the character in **Chaos In Andromeda** certainly can, and is also empowered to psychically control up to three robots (if he can acquire them). They are handy little beats, these droids, helping selflessly until such time as they are released, or more commonly until they are beaten up by the planet's denizens. They have the useful facility of remote movement, and also a first strike capability, in that they can be moved near to large contingents of enemy and then instructed to self-destruct. Their information gathering facility is limited, however. The largest problem I had with them was that they would not follow my character when it was moved. I had to move myself, and then move the droid independently. This is a major pain, especially with three robots chained to one's psyche.

Thus loaded down with cerebro-energetic gear, the character strides across the world of Koranis 12 looking for a most elusive politician/scientist called Mr Yai. As I have stressed it is wise to avoid overly long conversations with the inhabitants. More often than not the game provides the curt response: 'Your appearance prevents communication'. After an hour, this becomes totally irritating. Nevertheless, at specific points, certain characters provide titbits of scripted information which it is wise to write down, since they are unlikely to come in the correct order. Some characters are open to bribes; others give their information for free.

Were this not all submerged in a morass of unnecessary combat, the game would be extremely compulsive. However, the risk of death is so omnipresent that players will find themselves having always to run away from large groups of people just in case they are hostile. Though some people may enjoy mass fights, I do not, and the game regrettably wears my patience thin in this aspect.

Impressive Background

All this is but a caveat, though, given the amount of background that is provided. I got the impression that the creators have tried to imbue the game with a convincing storyline, with plot twists and with some level of irony. There is even a mythos of sorts in the manual, tracing the events of this future whereby the lifeforms of the universe have co-opted themselves into a form of psychic unity, and wherein the Andromedans, or more particularly the inhabitants of Koranis 12 have a history of revolt and 'freedom-fighting'. We are also left in some doubt as to the credentials of this Mr Yai we are supposedly rescuing, and find that the planet we are on is guilty of manufacturing some most egregious chemical weapons in the recent past.

Though I wouldn't agree that the game is enthralling, given that the front end leaves much to be desired, I do nevertheless find it interesting, and will play on. Anyone interested in the psionic side of sci-fi, whether it be Philip K Dick or Julian May, would certainly be intrigued, though I can't recommend it to those who consider themselves role-players, since there is too much combat by half for any interaction to take place. SP

Published by
On-line Software

Price £24.99

Available for the Amiga. Other versions to follow

CLUED UP

Eye of the Beholder

by Sandy Eisen

Graphics-based fantasy games as good as **Eye of the Beholder** do not appear that often; the last one, which set the current standard, was **Dungeonmaster** on the Atari ST. **Eye of the Beholder** (**Eye** for short) demonstrates the current state of the art on the IBM PC.

Inevitably the experience gained from playing **Dungeonmaster** is helpful but not essential in **Eye**. The new game not only has an excellent introduction, it has also been designed to introduce players gently with an easy first level.

Choosing Your Party

It is far more satisfying to generate your own individual party, rather than use the pre-rolled one included. However there is no need to spend too much time or planning on this. I found a conventional and obvious mix of two fighters up front with a magician and cleric behind to work well enough to complete the game. It is possible to make all kinds of race and character class combinations, but I suspect that none make any real difference.

Combination characters progress more slowly as experience is split between the classes. It is probably more important to achieve a single higher-level cleric or mage sooner, rather than having more than one of each. This is particularly important in order to solve food supply problems, since once a cleric reaches a certain level he can simply create food at will and collecting and carrying rations is no longer necessary. Thieves seem fairly pointless. I must admit to making one of my party a fighter/thief, but he never did much more than act as a fighter who progressed slowly. Despite his presence, and a plentiful supply of lock-picks, I never managed to pick a single lock, and I discovered numerous booby-traps only after they had caused damage.

Exploration

The basic rules are go everywhere, look everywhere, get everything and try everything. If you have the carrying capacity then all items that you come across should be picked up and kept until something potentially more useful is found.

Mapping

Good maps are essential if progress is to be made in **Eye**. The only way to get them is to draw them yourself, and this takes a lot of time. The inclusion of some kind of auto-mapping facility is an improvement which I think I would greatly appreciate in future developments of the system. Such a change would alter the character of the game considerably, since much of the challenge and intellectual puzzle stems from trying to produce an accurate map from the deliberately confusing dungeon environment. It is probably necessary to enjoy mapping in order to play **Eye** long enough to finish it.

Saves

The game program permits only a single saved position. A player can be more flexible and take more chances if multiple saves are available. This can be achieved easily with a pair of simple batch files using a file compression utility such as PKZIP.

Eye stores all party and dungeon save information in two game files called EOBDATA.SAV and LEVELS.TMP. If you write a batch file called (say) SAVE.BAT containing the line PKZIP EOBDATA.SAV LEVELS.TMP %1 into the **Eye** directory, then the command Save followed by the name you wish to give that particular saved game and the enter key will save your current save into a ZIP file.

You can now restart the game and make further saves via the normal method always secure in the knowledge that your previous save is accessible with the use of PKUNZIP. The same process can be repeated as many times as needed. All this assumes that you have the use of PKZIP.EXE and PKUNZIP.EXE and have copied them into the **Eye** directory.

Choice Of Spells

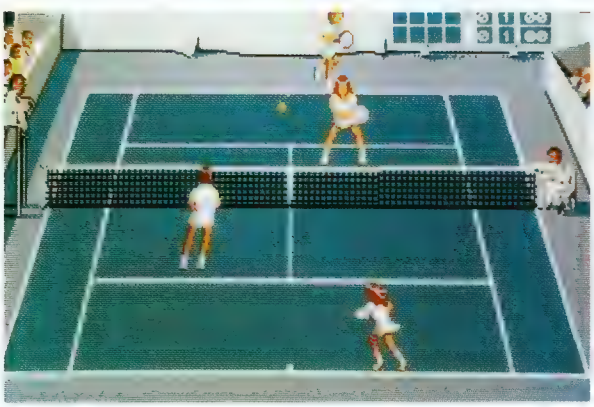
This will partially depend on individual choice, although initially this is not too large. Plenty of clerical cures and magical missiles make a good initial default. Experience teaches a lot on this subject and you will soon learn that there are areas of the dungeon where it is folly to enter without numerous counters to poison or paralysis pre-prepared. Any action in which damage is taken or spells used should be followed by adequate rest to heal the wounded and restore the spells, assuming that the absence of monsters and the presence of food supplies permits this.

The End

Given enough patience, persistence and luck you will eventually complete the quest. This is an enormous disappointment after the graphic thrills which you have battled through for so long. I mention this as a warning to others who may, as I did, expect some informational or visual extravaganza as a fitting climax. SSI have effectively not bothered to provide an ending, and the more people who let them know that this is not good enough, the less likely the company may be to put out an unfinished product in the future.

The message is play this one for the fun of playing it, because it's no fun to finish. SP

Quest For Glory II: Trial By Fire



Pro Tennis Tour 2

Lexi-Cross

QUEST FOR GLORY II

- Some useful addresses:
  The money changer – The end of Dinar Tarik
  The Astrologer – Tarik of Stars
- A map is an important first purchase – but you'll have to see the money changer first.
- Aziza can tell you all about elementals, once you find her, but watch your manners. It's etiquette to say 'Farewell' before leaving the table. Call at the magic shop before you go to see her. Keep on Laffin'!

PRO TENNIS TOUR 2

This super game is one of the best sports sims around at the moment but life on court is tough for a rookie, especially when you're up against cyborgs with serves like McEnroe and ground strokes like Borg. So what's the answer?: build up your character by saving each time you play. Don't forget that even a workout on the ball machine will improve your stats. The instructions on saving are not all that clear in the manual – it does not even mention that you can only save to the game disk. Also, you cannot save characters on a 512k machine.

PLANETFALL

- Beware of red herrings, helicopters, dark corridors, rooms filled with radiation…!
- Pay attention to Floyd's ramblings – sometimes they make sense! He can be very obliging, if asked to do the right thing.
- The laser has a power dial – use it!
- Nasty monsters will follow a source of heat anywhere.
- Ushaped bits of metal are usually magnets.
- Feeling ill? Medicine may be only a short train ride away.
- Always remember – Floyd can go places that you can't!
- You can't replace a broken circuit board with a broken circuit board – you'll need to have a ball first!
- Why is a ladder like a crossword puzzle?

LEXI -CROSS

Contrary to the comments in our review (issue #8), it *is* possible to save games.

Whenever you quit without completing a puzzle the game is automatically stored in the database. To retrieve this type 'Lex restore' from the Lex sub-directory.

To avoid lost data save after every two matches.

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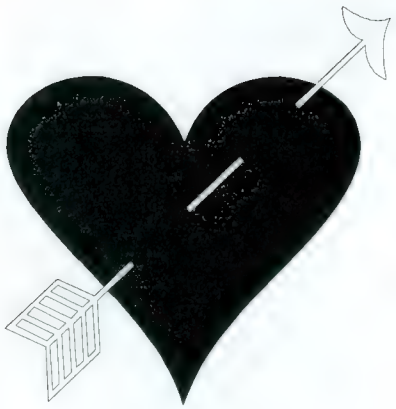
True Confessions



The lives and loves of Strategy Plus writers revealed

John Harrington

(Atari ST)

Kennedy Approach, the air traffic controller simulation from MicroProse, has caused me more sleepless nights than any other game. Quite why anyone would want to subject themselves willingly to the tensions of such a high stress job I don't know, but the chance to drill a few aeroplanes into the Rocky Mountains west of Denver airport is irresistable.

The graveyard shift at Atlanta is about as challenging as clubbing baby seals to death but peak time at JFK is like juggling with molotov cocktails. Once one of the planes deviates from the pattern it's not long before the whole thing goes to pot and the aircraft tannoy is announcing 'The plane on lane 1 of the Long Island Expressway is the 7.54 British Airways arrival from Dallas.' When playing at three in the morning I like to whack the digitised sound up loud so the neighbours think a plane is landing in the bedroom; it really freaks them out!

I have successfully resisted the temptation to splash out on an IBM so when it comes to American Football games my choice is really restricted. Nevertheless **Head Coach** for the ST has proved good value down the years, largely, I suspect, because of the atmosphere engendered by the fabulously stupid but somehow authentic sounding names of the players of the mythical Schoburg Franklins. I won the Superbowl in my first year, thanks to the inability of the opposition to stop the mighty Joe Kowalski on the sweep but I have since edited the stats of the other teams to provide a stiffer test. Now a 10-6 record won't even get me a wild card place, even with Kim van Obendorf having an All-pro year.

I'm still looking for a multi-player computer game to measure up to **Rails West!**. In the meantime **Oil Imperium** has been filling the gap. It's sneaky, vicious, greedy and corrupt. I love it, despite the fact that I get stitched up more often than Barry Sheene.

Brian Walker

(IBM PC)

Because of my heavy work load and my holidays in Las Vegas, it's difficult for me to get involved in long games. As we all know, the save facility is no real antidote for the hardened games junkie.

Recently I've been enjoying **Lexi-Cross** a lot. It's quick to play, fun to look at, and quite challenging. Another game I return to is **Warlords** from SSG. This is another game that can be completed in an evening providing you go a bit. On the top level (warlord) the game is tremendously challenging. The map gets a bit tedious after repeated play, so I would like to see SSG provide some 'new worlds' for this excellent game.

Another SSG game that I find myself going back to is **Gold of the Americas**. Although by no means a simulation it offers an accurate, if tongue in cheek, look at the colonialism of the period. The lack of information about what your opponents are up to can be frustrating but if you can live with that it gets a definite recommendation as a 'quickie'.

John Scott

(Commodore Amiga)

One of the problems about continually reviewing games is that there is seldom time to play a game through to its conclusion before a deadline date. And after that, there is usually something new to look at. Anyway, here's what I've been playing lately in those increasingly brief intervals between eating, sleeping, and working...

When I reviewed the budget release of Infocom's **Planetfall** some time ago, I mentioned that I would have liked there to have been a stronger storyline. Having just completed it, I feel that this comment was a bit premature. There *is* a story there, much more so than **Zork**, anyway. It's just that it takes a while to get into it. I really came to enjoy this little adventure, and if I were to fault it now, it would only be to say that it is a bit *too* little and is over all too quickly and unexpectedly.

Much as I loathe and detest the arcade game, something keeps drawing me back to another oldie, Mirrorsoft's **Rocket Ranger**. I would love some day, before I die, to finish this game. I've almost done it several times but the fact that the arcade sequences get progressively harder mean that I can never, ever defeat the nazi guard in the punch-ups and get the last two rocket parts. If anyone out there knows how to do it, please, have pity and drop me a line.

The other game I've occasionally been going back to is Accolade's **Ishido**. This got a bit of a panning in *Strategy Plus*, but I have to confess to liking it a lot. As a two player game it doesn't make it at all, but as a solitaire, patience-type game I find it enjoyable. I also find it relaxing to play – unlike most games.

BAUERNSCHLAU

Counting Sheep

by Martin Croft

I PREDICT that the 1990s are going to see the release of a huge number of ecologically sensitive 'green' farming games, in which players compete against each other to grow the largest cucumbers, radishes, leeks or whatever, without the benefit of fertilisers. This isn't one of them. Don't be fooled by the picture of sheep on the front cover: this is not a business strategy game about the realities of modern farming, but a simple strategy game about laying tiles and scoring points.

Not that there's anything wrong with simplicity: some of the best games around are the simplest, and some that should be very good have been ruined by designers who think that tortuous complexity makes up for a bad central idea.

Bauernschlau is basically a kids game, which means that anyone under the age of 12 can understand it in five minutes, while adults take half an hour to grasp the essentials.

Six Of The Best

The board is a hexagon grid. The central hexagon has a picture of a jolly sheepdog on it, while each of the six adjacent hexagons have farmhouses depicted on them, each identified by a different colour. It is in these farmhouses that the players start (so the game is for up to six players).

Each player starts with 10 pieces of fencing: during his (or her) turn, he begins by drawing a sheep tile from the pool of face down tiles, looking at it, then placing it still face down in any unoccupied hexagon (except the farmhouses and the central hex) on the board. Then, he can perform one of three actions: he can simply turn over a face down tile anywhere on the board; he can take the sheep dog piece, collect a face down tile from anywhere on the board, 'herd' it to any other unoccupied hex, then turn it over; or he can build one section of fencing by laying a fence piece along a hexside, either starting at his farm or continuing an existing fence.

On The Lamb

The game ends when any one farmer has extended his fences so that they run from his farm to the edge of the board, so enclosing a section of the board, and every hexagon in that farm has been filled with face up sheep tiles. At that point, any farmers who have succeeded in enclosing territory score points for the sheep in their farm. Players whose farms are not yet enclosed (ie one or both of their fences do not yet reach the edge of the board) automatically score 10 less points than the lowest scoring player who has successfully enclosed his farm.

The sheep tiles are either black or white. White ones score positive points, and range in value from 1 to 5. Black ones are always worth -3 points. Because black sheep are penalties, you (ewe?) get two bonus turns is you are 'unlucky' enough to turn one over during your go. The other important point about scoring is that hexes which are marked with two white doves or three white geese score two times and three times the value of a sheep tile placed on them – so you could score as high as 15 points, or as low as -9 points in one hex.

In certain circumstances, the best move may be to turn over a black sheep, especially if it is on someone else's farm: you automatically get two turns, which can be very useful if you are trying to sneak one of your fences around a high scoring white sheep, or avoid being forced to take a high negative scoring black sheep into your flock. Since you place one sheep tile face down at the beginning of your turn, you have a reasonably good chance of knowing where at least one black sheep is hidden: if it is on someone else's farm, you can just flip it over, while if it is on your own farm, you can use the sheepdog to move it.

Using the sheepdog has an added advantage: after moving a sheep with it, you can place it on its side on any unoccupied hex on the board: this means that no sheep tiles may be placed their until the dog is used again, and moved away from that hex.

The strategic challenge in the game lies in juggling your limited options: you cannot both collect the finest flock of white sheep ever seen and build your fences at the same time. You must balance the two, otherwise either you will be left with loads of sheep but no completed fences, or completed fences but no sheep, at the point when someone else finishes their farm. A small but full farm can beat a large but unfinished or unpopulated farm easily – even if it contains nothing but black sheep!

To an extent, **Bauernschlau** is a game of bluff and counterbluff. Is the tile your opponent has laid, face down, on a high scoring hex in his own farm a high value white tile, or a black sheep? Dare you steal it from him, herd it over to one of your own geese hexes, and flip it over? What if the wool is being pulled over your eyes?

Divert Ewe

Bauernschlau is a neat, simple game. It is designed for family play, and looks to be perfect for anyone with youngish children to amuse. For so-called 'serious' gamers, it is an amusing diversion, which is probably best played in those odd half hours spent arguing about which of the really challenging games you are going to play next: **Civilization** it isn't, but then it never claimed to be. It is fun and amusing, but essentially lightweight.

One point which must be made, though, is the sheer physical quality

Continued on page 60

Designed by
Tom Schoeps

Published by
F X Schmid

Price £24.95

2-6 players

ADVANCED CIVILIZATION

Previewed by Jennifer Schlickbernd

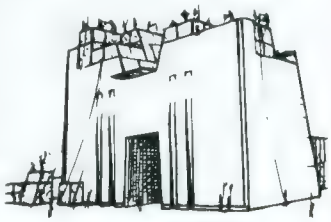
ADVANCED CIVILIZATION is the third and by far the most comprehensive expansion to Avalon Hill's game **Civilization**, originally published in 1981. The first expansion added new trade card sets, and the second added a new map panel, and a new country, Iberia. Frances Tresham designed the game and the first two expansions, but this expansion is designed by a team headed by Bruce Harper without any input from Mr Tresham. That may automatically turn off fans of the traditional **Civilization**, but I'd ask that they at least gave Mr Harper's game a good look.

Advanced Civilization adds new rules, more trade cards (but no new sets), a whole new group of civilization cards, new calamities, and victory points. The game has a definite different feel to it. I believe that it does keep the flavour and the intent of the original game, while adding to the playability of the game.

I was part of the design team that helped Bruce create the new game. I can modestly say that I gave the suggestion to have some sort of help for civil war, discouraged the initial rule where whenever you lost a city to a player because of a calamity you lost a trade card, did lots of playtesting in general, and also did the final proofing of the document before it was sent to Avalon Hill. It was my first experience really playtesting/designing a game, and I must say I enjoyed it thoroughly. It really helped that my husband is a real fanatic of **Civilization**, since I could then bounce a lot of ideas off of him, and he could help with making sure the original feel of the game was kept.

Many people had two major problems with **Civilization**. The first was that the game had to be played to the end to truly determine a winner, and the second was that the leader of the game could be determined possibly hours before the game ended, but there was no practical way to get the leader. Yes, the infamous trade embargoes could be tried, but particularly for games with less than seven players, many times the embargoes weren't enforced, or the leader had such a lead that it didn't matter, or the leader had that last salt and you lost a lot of points for not trading with them. You could try taking down a couple of cities, but unless you could make the leader go backward on the AST, it was a lot of effort without a lot of return. Calamity trading was *Just Not Done* in many **Civilization** playing groups, since the calamities could be so devastating to the unprepared that the recipient would suicide against the person who played the calamity on them. People also had a problem with the fact that only so many civilizations could have certain technologies. Once coinage was discovered, why couldn't all civilizations coin money?

I personally didn't like the fact that you could lose a 6-8 hour game in the first two hours by buying the wrong civilization cards, and in fact buying civilization cards could be more an exercise in numbers than in what your civilization needed. 'Lessee, with the cards I have now, if I buy Clothmaking for 45 points then it will be next to impossible to make it past the 1000 point barrier with only 11 cards'. This seemed silly and very unrealistic. The trading was not as fun as it could be, with those able to do maths quickly in their heads at a clear advantage to those of us who needed to really think about the value of what was being traded in order to figure out if we were being robbed or not. Being that the intent of **Civilization** was not to reward mathematical whizzes, I felt that the game wasn't well served by such rules. Last but not least, many of our games were won by those who counted grain, in order to avoid the infamous civil war card. This seemed tedious to me. Either the calamity should not be so severe, or you should be able to do something about it before the end game (when Democracy was likely to be purchased).



These issues and more have been addressed in **Advanced Civilization**. First off, let me describe the changes to the components of the game. The documentation suggests that the Western Expansion Map be used and I'd certainly agree, since it gives Africa more room to expand which it will desperately need in this game. The number of trade cards for many of the commodities has been increased, resulting in more points to spend on civilization cards. All calamity cards are now brown-backed, although the traditionally red-backed ones cannot be traded. This was done so that the players would not know which calamity was about to be

Advanced Civilization will be published by The Avalon Hill Game Company

This preview is based on the final playtest version. There may be last minute changes which this article does not reflect

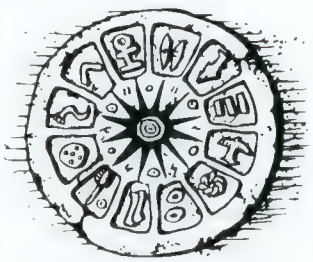
drawn, and also to allow for a variant that would permit the trading of those calamities. There is also a Gamer's Guide. This contains several articles dealing with the changes to the game, and also suggestions for variant rules. There are good strategy hints provided too in all the articles.

There are extensive rule changes. There are now rules for late arriving players and early departures and also for a time limited game. The game now accepts eight players instead of seven. The board is awfully crowded with eight, and I'd really recommend the Western Expansion board if you were going to attempt the game with eight. The set-up for the trade decks has changed. Now, tradeable calamities are shuffled into the deck, they are no longer automatically at the bottom of the commodity pile. There are four new calamities and changes to some existing calamities, to be described later in this preview. Conflict resolution has changed. Now, if you lose a city, the plundering player gets to draw a random trade card from your hand, and also transfer three tokens from her stock to her treasury.

Trading is different. Instead of giving points when you offer a trade, you must tell the other person two of the cards you propose to trade. You must still trade at least three cards. This both allows for easier calamity trading, and also eliminates the hated maths previously involved. All calamities in play must be played, you can no longer discard calamities. If you keep a calamity that you drew, its effects must be resolved against you. Calamities can be traded multiple times in a trading session. When the trading session is over, whoever has the calamity is stuck with it. At first these rules seem to be at least disconcerting... 'Why would any trade session ever end?' one thinks. But in fact trade sessions do end, and people do accept the inevitable. This rule certainly makes trading more frenetic than previous, and a poker face, or at least one that isn't open as a book can be of benefit here.

Resolving calamities has changed too. Calamities are resolved before acquiring civilization cards so that you no longer can buy Medicine to offset that pending Epidemic. All secondary effects of calamities now must be dealt out, no more Mr Nice Guys. This change to the game was included to be able to better get the leader of the game. A player that has been hit with one calamity, and made the secondary victim of two or three more is likely to lose position in the game. A player can be the primary victim of only two calamities, even if they receive more. The two are chosen randomly instead of in order as it was previously.

Religion has been added as a new Civilization group. There is no longer a limit on the number of Civilization cards you can hold in your hand, and there are no limits on the number of Civilization cards available (although you can't hold duplicates). This changes the Civilization card acquisition strategy tremendously. You can actually buy what you can afford and what you think you may need. AST order is still used to determine who acquires when, but most times acquisition can be simultaneous.



The AST itself has undergone some changes, and the requirements to move from age to age have changed. Stone and Early/Late Bronze Ages are the same, but to enter the Early Iron Age you need four cities, civilization cards from all five groups (remember Religion has been added) and nine civilization cards. Entry into the Late Iron Age requires five cities and the number of points (which has been increased) printed on each space you are trying to enter. A significant change to movement on the AST is that if you don't have at least the required number of cities while in an epoch, you cannot move forward until you again meet the city requirements. So if you entered the Early Iron Age with four cities, but calamities or aggression took you down to three cities, you won't move forward until you have four cities in the AST movement phase again.

A victory point system is now used to determine the winner. Simply, you add the value of your civilization cards, your trading cards in hand, and your treasury. You also get points for your AST position (100 points for each space) and 50 points for each city you own. This means that you can make a good determination as to who is leading, and also the game can be called at any time and you can still determine a winner.

The following is a short description of the new and changed calamities. Note that the primary victim is the person who had the calamity at the end of the trading session.

Stack 2

Earthquake/Volcano (changed) – you now must lose a city to a volcano, sacrificial virgins (single tokens) are no longer accepted. If you have no cities on a volcanic site, you lose a city to earthquake. Engineering causes you to have a city lost to earthquake reduced instead of eliminated.

Treachery (new) – you lose one city to the person who traded you the card.

Stack 3

Famine (changed) – grain used to offset famine may not be used to acquire civilization cards in the same turn.

Superstition (new) – three cities belonging to the primary victim are reduced. Religion civilization cards reduce the effect.

Stack 4

Civil War (changed) – the Music and Drama & Poetry civilization cards allow the first faction to be increased by five unit points each. The Military civilization card (new card) removes five unit points from each side, after the sides are chosen.

Slave Revolt (new) – fifteen tokens belonging to the primary victim may not be used to support their cities. The primary victim undergoes an immediate city support check. If the victim has Mining (new card), the number of tokens are increased by five; if the victim has Enlightenment (new card), the number of tokens are reduced by five.

Stack 5

Flood (changed) – if the primary victim has no units on a flood plain, they lose a coastal city.

Barbarian Hordes – fifteen tokens belonging to one of the nations not being played show up in one of the

primary victim's starting areas and start marching around, doing the maximum amount of conflict damage possible. After combat in each area, they leave the number of tokens permitted by the population, and move on to another of the primary victim's areas if possible. Crete is immune to barbarian hordes.

Stack 6
Epidemic (changed) – a player holding Roadbuilding (new card) loses an additional five unit points to epidemic.

Stack 7
Civil Disorder (changed) – the number of the primary victim's cities reduced is increased by one if the primary victim holds Military or Roadbuilding.

Stack 8
Iconoclasm and Heresy (changed) – the number of cities lost to iconoclasm and heresy is reduced by three if the victim holds Theology (new card), and increased by one if the victim holds Monotheism (new card) or Roadbuilding.

Stack 9
Piracy (changed) – the primary victim loses two coastal cities to pirates. Two cities chosen by the person trading the cards are replaced by neutral city tokens. The victim then designates two other coastal cities to be replaced by pirate cities. Both of those cities may not belong to the same player.

So, those are the calamities in a nutshell. Treachery, superstition and barbarian hordes are all tradeable calamities, along with of course epidemic, civil disorder, iconoclasm and heresy, and piracy, just like in **Civilization**. They have a big impact on the game now, and a significant amount of your strategy will be devoted to dealing with them. In the Gamer's Guide, there are a number of articles that talk about calamities, including The Wrath of The Gods, an article specifically on calamities, written by yours truly. The important thing is to choose your civilization cards wisely, which brings us to a description of the new and changed civilization cards. I didn't repeat the cards' effects on calamities in the following descriptions.

(Changes) The Craft cards provide a 10 point credit to Monotheism. The Science cards provide a 20 point credit to Theology. The Art cards provide a five point credit to Enlightenment.

Crafts

Roadbuilding (140 credits, new) – a player who hold Roadbuilding may move her tokens through one land area into a second land area as long as her tokens are the only ones in the first land area entered.

Mining (180 credits, new) – Mining allows the holder to increase the value of any set of Iron, Bronze, Silver, Gems or Gold by one card when acquiring civilization cards. It can only be used once per turn.

Craft/Science

Engineering (140 credits, changed) – player must own Engineering before acquiring Roadbuilding or Mining. Engineering now gives an offensive bonus for attacking cities.

Sciences

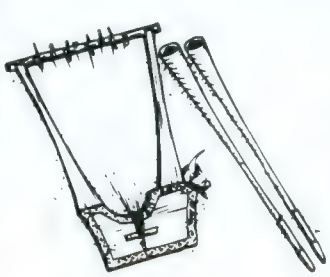
Metalworking (changed) – Metalworking gives a twenty point credit to Military.

Science/Arts

Mathematics (230 credits, new) – Mathematics provides a 25 point credit to Philosophy and Theology.

Arts

Architecture (120 credits, changed) – players who hold Architecture may use tokens from stock once per turn to assist in the building of one city. At least half of the tokens used to build the city must come from on the board.



Civics

Democracy (changed) – a player holding Democracy is immune from tax revolts.

Military (180 credits, new) – a player holding Military moves after all other players not holding Military.

Religion (new group)

Mysticism (Religion/Arts – 50 credits) – provides a 15 point credit to all other Religion cards.

Deism (80 credits) – provides a fifteen point credit to all other Religion cards except Mysticism.

Enlightenment (150 credits) – prerequisite for Monotheism or Theology. It provides a 15 point credit to Monotheism and Theology.

Monotheism (220 credits) – at the end of the calamity phase, a player holding Monotheism can convert the occupants of any one area adjacent by land to her own tokens. This applies to both cities and tokens, but not to pirate cities or barbarians. Players holding Monotheism or Theology are immune to the effects of Monotheism.

Theology (250 credits) – provides immunity to Monotheism.

I hope you have been intrigued by this preview of **Advanced Civilization**. This article is not meant to be a replacement for the rules, but to allow you to get a good feeling for how the game is constructed. For those of you who want to know how the game plays, well, it's definitely different. More frenetic, more random, but still a lot of strategy and long term planning. I had reached the point where **Civilization** was no longer an interesting game for me, but this new expansion really has me excited about the game again. Hopefully it will give a more enjoyable and different game for the traditional **Civilization** players, as well as attract new players to the game. SP

DROIDS

I Robot

by Brian Walker

ROBOTS HAVE had a somewhat chequered history when it comes to games. Mostly their appearances have been restricted to American sci-fi games, where combat modifiers reign supreme and the best you can hope for in terms of component quality is decent card stock. Stepping outside these parameters comes **Droids**, a top quality production from France.

The most immediately striking things about **Droids** are the droids themselves – plastic figurines about six inches in height, like miniature 'Action Men'. The game revolves around a set of basic rules, on to which are tagged various scenarios (at the time of writing only four of the seven scenarios available had been translated).

Order Chits

The play sequence is: draw order chits, program orders, execute moves. The order chits are chunky counters. These are placed on **Scrabble** style tile racks. The programming consists of placing any or all of the seven order chits. The orders themselves consist of movement for land and water, repair, or action orders (usually these involve some form of violence). The chits are placed on lines adjacent to the player's home base. The lines are referred to as 'transmitters' as it is from these that the Droids are given instructions. The chits contain symbols which indicate their function, for example an arrow symbol would mean that the Droid could move one space in that direction.

The catch is that the transmitter on which the chit is placed must be directly in line with the location on the board of the Droid itself, otherwise it becomes useless. When two Droids appear on the same line then combat becomes possible. A D10 is rolled and if the number rolled is equal to or greater than the number of spaces between the two Droids, then a hit has occurred. If the number is double or triple, then two or three hits occur. Unusually, instead of the Droid itself taking the hit, a transmitter gets downed and a black marker is placed over it. This means that the transmitter is no longer in service and the Droid cannot move along that corresponding line.

When all ten transmitters have been knocked out the owning player is eliminated as their Droids would be unable to move. Transmitters may be brought back to life by visiting a repair robot. In addition to the Droids and repair robots, a number of shields and obstacles can be found littering the grid. The shields may be picked up and placed in the 'hand' of the Droid (a cute touch, this).

Skewered Plans

What makes the game really exciting, however, are the chits which enable a player to move not just his own Droid, but other Droids as well. Even repair robots can be moved. This, of course, leads to much gnashing of teeth as the best laid plans are skewered. Despite this, planning is possible and a coherent strategy will pay dividends. The game curiously recalls chess in that it is entirely possible to plan six or seven moves ahead, though there is no guarantee of success.

The scenarios provide a wide range of options. My favourite is Operation De-Mine where the repair robots develop a malevolent streak and lay a mine every time they received an order. Bang goes a Droid when it steps on one. Like many of the other scenarios, this can be played by two teams of two. There is also a solitaire option though this has yet to be translated.

Droids is a super game offering a considerable cerebral challenge yet at the same is very humorous. Much of this is down to the top quality production values – the Droids are a sight to behold as they troop up and down the board. The scenarios are well thought out and given the simplicity of the base system, it should not be too difficult to come up with a few of your own. SP

Published by Eurogames

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1-4 players

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Bauernschlau, continued

of the game. It isn't cheap, but, boy, do you get value for money, as with all German games. The hex sides have actually been indented, so that your (hexagonally cross sectioned wooden) fence pieces won't slide about. The sheep counters are large, solid and well drawn: they have also been perfectly die cut, so you just have to pop them out from the sheet of card they are printed on.

This may sound silly: but I have just bought an equally expensive game from a well-known American company, where the pieces had been so badly die cut that, in my efforts to separate the counters, one ended up in two halves. SP

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Lit crit

I'd like to use this forum to issue an appeal on behalf of all literature loving computer gamers. This appeal is addressed to those responsible for game documentation, and it is simply this: please, please, stick to what you're good at and stop trying to be novelists. It seems that more and more games are appearing with reams of badly written fiction as part of the packaging. When we open a game box, we want to play a game – if what we really wanted to do was to snuggle up with a good read we would have bought a book instead. Then we could perhaps enjoy a well crafted plot, written in coherent English. If your game *really* needs a novella to make it intelligible, perhaps you should think again before releasing it? Or perhaps you could hire a real writer to do the job?

'Ah,' I hear you exclaim. 'But no one forces you to read it!' Really? Surely you realise that we think that we may be missing some essential game information unless we force ourselves to plough through the turgid stuff? Indeed, the last manual I looked at informed me that 'If you have not read the section of the Manual entitled 'The Quest' (ie the novella), you will not be able to find your way around'.

So please, if you must have an accompanying novel, at least choose one which deservedly exists in its own right (**Wonderland**), or spare us the prolonged fictional preludes. After all **Warlords** (SSG) manages to be a good game set in a fantasy world and is no worse, indeed, is much better, for the absence of an accompanying novella.

'Nuff said?

John Scott
Lisburn
Co Down, NI

Effusions

I would like to offer a few suggestions to the software companies who are always moaning about the amount of piracy going on.

It may be true that there are five pirate copies of **Nobby's Farty Blaster III** for every legitimate one, but maybe that's because people who bought **NFB I** and **II** don't fancy shelling out 25 smackers for what is essentially the same game.

I am lucky enough to be able to afford the games I want, but most people have a finite amount of money to spend on software. If Fred can only afford three games a month it stands to reason that he won't buy 10. Therefore it is up to the software houses to fight for our business by offering long term entertainment and *value for money!*

In my opinion most companies don't do this and then blame piracy for loss of sales. After all, how many people with pirate copies would have bought an original?

There are ways of avoiding piracy:

1. Offer a quality manual and sophisticated controls: I'd like to see someone play **F-19 Stealth Fighter** without the manual.

2. Make the game far more enjoyable *with* the documentation: **Champions of Krynn** did this very well with the Adventurers' Journal.

3. Get a reputation for producing quality games. This way people will happily buy them because the last one was enjoyable. There are several companies whose games I would buy without even seeing a review (Microprose, SSI, Origin, to name a few). Unfortunately there are several more whose games I wouldn't buy even if it got rave reviews.

I've been involved in selling for some years now, and if my products were as badly made as some of the poorly programmed, bugged software that I have bought over the years, I'd have been out of a job long ago. So come on software houses, get to work, give us some great games and we'll keep buying them. And if you must bring out **Nobby's Farty Blaster IV**, put a £10 price tag on it because that's all it's worth.

REMEMBER: CUSTOMERS PAY YOUR WAGES SO GIVE 'EM VALUE FOR MONEY.

M D Clayton
Marchwood
Southhampton SO4 4YE

A tenner? That's inflation for you.

Socked

In issue 8 a letter from David Glynn complained about using the word S****r instead of football, your reply was that your use of it was to distinguish between football and American football. Because the *Sun* newspaper and other tabloids have done away with 'football' and replaced it with S****r is no reason for yourselves to follow suit. Everyone in the country except tabloids and certain newscasters call football what it is. IF you want to distinguish between football and American football, call football football and American football American football – simple. I can assure you we will understand since we have been calling football football for over 100 years.

I suspect you have been brainwashed into thinking that football is what the Americans play and S****r is what we play.

Resist the attempt of certain parts of the media. Fight back – you can do it!

The renewal of my subscription is on the line!

B Reed
Eastbourne
Sussex BN22 7LU

Winner of the SP *Trophy for the most pedantic letter of the month.*

Unforgivable

The review of **Republic of Rome** was reasonably accurate though it was unforgivable not to mention its more than decent solo scenario.

Robert Hulston
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Elite plus

I was disappointed to read of your plans to distribute free software with *Strategy Plus*. I accept that almost every computer games magazine on the newsagent's shelf has a cassette or diskette attached to its front cover and that the presence of these bulky appendages is a major purchasing incentive. My seven year old son's purchasing decision for his monthly C64 magazine is in fact based solely upon the content of the free software tape, the magazine itself barely receives a glance.

I am sure that if you conducted a survey of your readership you would discover that the majority of your readers are mature games enthusiasts not adolescent joystick wagglers and that we buy your magazine for the informed reviews and precisely because it isn't just another computer games magazine.

The point I am trying to make is that your magazine is not in the same market as those you are trying to emulate.

Furthermore, as you quite rightly mention, *Strategy Plus* is not dedicated to a specific operating system, so not only do you have the problem of disk format which plagues the PC magazine offerings, but the added problem of which operating system to favour.

continued on page 64

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Whatever you do will be completely wasted on the boardgaming fraternity, unless you also intend to include free boardgames with every issue like the Avalon Hill house magazine.

The net result of this is to lead me to the conclusion that the whole scheme is a huge white elephant.

Yes! You may occasionally sell an extra copy of *Strategy Plus* if by chance you select the right game, on the right disk format, for the right operating system to attract the browsing eyes of an adolescent who's bored with zapping mutant tomatoes. But those of us who buy *Strategy Plus* for its content have got to subsidise this activity when in fact we have no interest in it whatsoever.

If it is your desire to compete with the lower order of computer magazine then I can only suggest that you go for it 100%. Reduce your reviews to less than one hundred words, think up a neat new way to show ratings so that your readers don't need to read the article anyway, add lots of extra screen shots and competitions and give your reviewers natty new names like 'Storming Norman'.

On the other hand if you want to persuade me to pay out for a year's subscription then how about including a discount order form for software and boardgames from reputable retail outlets like Strategic Plus Software and introducing an incentive scheme for people who introduce new subscribers.

What you need to realise is that your magazine appeals to a small elitist segment of the gaming market, our average age is much higher than that of the readers of other computer magazines and we expect to be treated as adults. So how about thinking of your readership as an exclusive club of loyal supporters rather than a group of fickle semiliterates.

David Hatch
Winnersh
Berks RG11 5SN

As I pointed out in the last editorial, the decision to offer novelties was forced on us by pressure from the news trade.

Strategy Plus *has no intention of appealing only to 'elitist segments' or 'exclusive clubs'. There is no good reason why it should not appeal to anyone with an interest in games.*

Bad format

I am a wargamer who also computes. Therefore your magazine should be ideal. Unfortunately I must make a number of criticisms:

You claim to support the IBM PC, Amiga, ST and Mac. I appreciate that not all games are or ever will be available on all of these formats. If your review does not cover a particular machine then the very least that you could do is include it in the margin box saying when the game is anticipated, 'No release likely' or something similar.

Your coverage of the four machines should at least be comprehensive in this respect: it should include some reference to *each* machine in *each* review not just sometimes; which is scrappy.

£2.50 is too much for a magazine without a cover disk. Some vague advert for some unknown game for an IBM PC is not good enough.

It is unlikely that you will properly support the chosen 4 machines in cover disk material – the cover disks provided by others seem to get poorer and poorer.

A sensible price is more important. I shall be checking to see that my machine is adequately covered in future before buying the magazines.

You are almost there but not quite. You are mainly covering the right sort of areas but not in quite the right way. A bit of reform and tightening up and the magazine could be brilliant.

Geoff Curran
Burghfield Common
Berks RG7 3ND

What is it about Berkshire that makes its inhabitants write such lengthy, pedagogic letters? – Production Editor.

Batty

Please would you give me hints and tips on **BAT** which was reviewed in issue 4. I can beat the man at the arcade and collect the credit card with the 5500 credits in it. I love **BAT** and would really like to complete it.

Iain Cooper
4 Woodlands Drive
Brightons
Falkirk FK2 0TF
Scotland

*Any of our readers got **BATs** in the belfry and can help.* SP

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FOR SALE: Risk in good order, £4, plus various ancient consoles, software for Spectrum, CPC and other 8-bits. Few pieces for PC, ST, Amiga. Tel 03985 438 or send SAE to A Jones, 2 Townmead, Oakford, nr Tiverton, Devon EX16 9EW for full list.

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BRAND NEW AMIGA games for sale: **Typhoon of Steel** & **Breach 2**. Plus **Elite, Arnhem, Desert Rats** & **Laser Squad** expansion for Amstrad 6128. All for £30. Contact Tony Shields, tel 0246 275568.

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ATARI ST GAMES: Maniac Mansion, Shadogate, Final Conflict, Imperium, Waterloo, Dragon's Breath, Frontline, Murder, The Immortal (1 meg). All as new £9 each or the lot for £60. Call Peter, tel Kidlington 08675 4181 after 6pm.

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WANTED DESPERATELY any of the following boardgames: **Take Four** Spears 1978, **Focus** Spears 1979, **Shaska** Ravenburger 1977, **Epaminondas** Philmar 1975, **Ploy** 3M 1974, **Pergoda** F X Schmid 1975, **Mentalis** Mentalis Ltd 1977, **Cul de Sac** Lazy Days, **Stranded** Spears 1981. Anthony Holt, 29 Coventry Drive, Prospect Hill, Workshop, Notts S81 0RR.

PC GAMES for sale: £10 – **Ultima V/VI** (both + hints), **Imperium** (3½"), **Starfleet 2, 688 Attack Sub** (+ hints), **Star Control, Command HQ, Star Saga One, Renegade Legion** (3½"), **Empire, Space Max, Storm Across Europe, Universe II, Gold of the Americas, Sword of Aragon, Starflight 2** (+ hints), **Secret of the Silver Blades** (+ hints), **Mechwarrior, Gunboat, Guns & Butter**. £15 – **Battletech 2, Railroad Tycoon** (3½"), **Their Finest Hour, F-19** (+ hints). £5 – **Worlds At War** (no box), **Stellar Crusade, Sim City, Omega, Bard's Tale II** (+ hints), **Red Lightning**. K B Goldit, 29/6 Sunbury Place, Edinburgh, EH4 3BY.

WANTED Amiga games: strategy/simulations/RPGs and Adventure must be cheap. Contact Andrew, tel 061-428 0085, or write to 856 Kingsway, E Didsbury, Manchester M20 0WQ.

ST SOFTWARE for sale: **Balance of Power, Colossus Chess, Elite, Gato, Joan of Arc, TV Sports Football, UMS, Vulcan**. All are boxed originals. Offers to D Taylor, 203 Ditchfield Road, Widnes, Cheshire.

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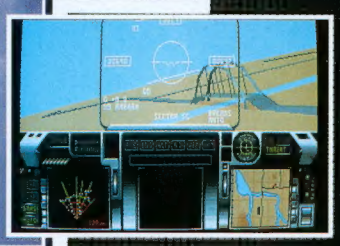

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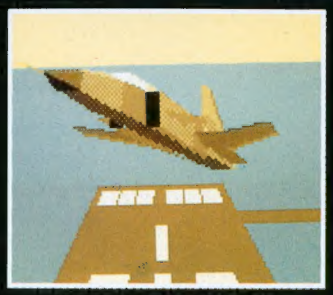

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